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SUMMER 1968 VOLUME XXXV, NUMBER 3

CONTENTS

ARTICLES

The Politics of Self-Parody
Richard Poirier 339

Columbia: Seven Interviews
Stephen Donadio 354

The Soft Machine
Thomas R. Edwards 433

STORIES

International Love
Alan Friedman 393

ARGUMENTS

The Turner Thesis
Michael Thelwell, Robert Coles 403

THEATER

The Season
Martin Duberman 415

CONTEMPORARY NONSENSE 430

BOOKS

Death Kit by Susan Sontag: Tony Tanner 446

The Myth of the Machine by Lewis Mumford; The Radiant City by Le Corbusier; The Levittowners by Herbert J. Gans: Michael Harrington 451

Giacomo Joyce by James Joyce: John Hollander 459

Forms of Discovery by Yvor Winters; Selected Essays by William Troy: John Goode 462

The Elegies of a Glass Adonis by C. A. Trypanis; The Ikons and Other Poems by Lawrence Durrell; Short Poems by John Berryman; New and Selected Poems by Jean Garrigue; "A" 1-12 by Louis Zukofsky; Prepositions: the Collected Essays of Louis Zukofsky; Words by Robert Creeley; Poems 3 by Alan Dugan: G. S. Fraser 467

Treblinka by Jean-Francois Steiner: Robert Jay Lifton 475

Nabokov: His Life in Art by Andrew Field: Julian Moynahan 483

LETTERS 489

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NOTES

STEPHEN DONADIO teaches English at Columbia. . . . **ALAN FRIEDMAN** is writing a novel. Mr. Friedman teaches English at Swarthmore. . . . **MICHAEL THELWELL** describes himself as a lapsed New Leftist. . . . **ROBERT COLES** is a psychiatrist at Harvard. . . . **MARTIN DUBERMAN's Metaphors** is currently being performed at the Actors' Playhouse. He is working on a longer play tentatively titled **Groups. . . . THOMAS R. EDWARDS** describes himself as "a middle-aged soul formed by the literary culture of the twenties and thirties but anxious to feel up to date." He teaches at Rutgers and has written a book on Pope. . . . **TONY TANNER** is currently teaching at Emory. . . . Macmillan published **MICHAEL HARRINGTON's Toward a Democratic Left** in April. . . . **JOHN GOODE** is currently writing on D. H. Lawrence. He teaches at the University of Reading, England. . . . **G. S. FRASER** tells us that he made a tour of Belgian universities for the British Council a month or so before the big Belgian sit-ins started. His latest book is a critical study of Lawrence Durrell. . . . **ROBERT JAY LIFTON** is the author of books on brainwashing in China and survivors of Hiroshima. . . . **JULIAN MOYNAHAN** was in London during 1967-67. He is at work on his third novel, **A Dog's Life.**

THE INTERVIEWS: Because press coverage has in general been inadequate and misleading, at least a bare outline of recent events at Columbia seems in order by way of introduction to the interviews appearing in this issue: **Tues. April 23.** SDS members, planning march on Low Library to protest penalties against 6 radical student leaders, meet with black students at noon Sundial rally. After unsuccessful attempt to enter Low, crowd marches to new CU gym site in Morningside Park, tears down part of fence around construction area. Crowd regathers briefly at Sundial, then moves into Hamilton Hall, chanting "IDA must go." **Wed. April 24. 5 a.m.** Black students in Hamilton ask white students to leave. These 200-300 white students charge Low, break into President Kirk's private offices and barricade themselves in. **10 p.m.** Architecture students refuse to leave Avery and gradually seize the building. **Thurs. April 25.** Group composed mainly of graduate students enters Fayerweather, barricades the doors. Ad Hoc Faculty Group founded, pledges to prevent anyone from entering occupied buildings forcibly. **10-11 p.m.** Group members stop threatened rush on Fayerweather by counterdemonstrators. **Fri. April 26. 1 a.m.** Mathematics Bldg. taken by demonstrators from Low. **1:05 a.m.** Vice-Pres. Truman tells Ad Hoc Group police have been called. **3:15 a.m.** Plainclothesmen charge faculty members guarding Low. **Tues. April 30. 2 a.m.** First bust. 1000 uniformed police, plainclothesmen, TPF move onto campus to clear buildings. **May 21–22.** Hamilton re-occupied as protest against Administration's disciplinary procedures. Second campus bust.

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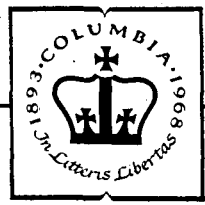
COLUMBIA  COLUMBIA

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Richard Poirier

THE POLITICS OF SELF-PARODY

Parody has always had the function of literary criticism. From Chaucer's "Sir Thopas" through Max Beerbohm's "The Mote in the Middle Distance" on to Hemingway's *The Torrents of Spring* and Henry Reed's Eliotic "Chard Whitlow," parody constitutes criticism of the truest, often the best kind. For one thing, it demands the closest possible intimacy with the resources of a given style; for another, it treats writing as a performance, rather than as a codification of significances. Up to now parody has been almost entirely other-directed — by one writer against another or at the literary modes of a particular period. Even self-parody has traditionally been other-directed, as in Coleridge's "On a Ruined Cottage in a Romantic Country" or Swinburne's "Nephelidia," allowing a writer to externalize and disown the mannerisms of his earlier work.

As against these recognized forms of parody, I want to define a newly developed one, a literature of self-parody that makes fun of itself *as it goes along*: it proposes not the rewards so much as the limits of its own procedures, it shapes itself around its own dissolvents, it calls into question not any particular literary structure so much as the enterprise, the activity itself of creating any literary form, of empowering an idea with a style. The literature of self-parody continues, then, the critical function that parody has always assumed, but with a difference. While parody has traditionally been anxious to suggest that life or history or reality has made certain literary styles outmoded, the literature of self-parody, quite unsure of the relevance of such standards, makes fun of the effort even to verify them by the act of writing.

Thus the difference between older kinds of parody and this newer one is a measure of the difference between concepts of

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criticism. Very roughly, the distinction is between a (to me) discredited but still dominant criticism that trusts in *a priori* standards of life, reality and history, and a criticism that finds no support in these terms. So far as I am concerned, the terms point to nothing authoritative and refer instead to constructs as tentative as the fictions they are supposed to stabilize. Especially in America, and nearly without exception among Americanists, the great majority of critics still operate as if articulated forms of life or reality or history were not as much the product of human invention as literature is, as if they were uncontaminated by human contrivance and could thus be a measure for such obvious contrivances as literature and literary criticism. In loyal opposition while fancying itself at odds, a much smaller group would claim that literature creates a reality of its own, that literature is itself an act of history and not a reflection of the history put together by historians, that it can give us while we read a consciousness of life just as "real" as any accredited to daily living. But this admirable minority is still bound by the essential suppositions of the majority: it, too, depends on a radical differentiation between literary shapings of life, reality and history, and analogous shapings in presumably nonfictional sources like news-reporting (preferably on-the-spot), documents (especially hidden ones), sociological and anthropological researches (constituting to my mind the most interesting novels and stories now being written) and of course history (meaning history books, the best of which are usually written by people who object to William Styron's idea that they are less novelistic than he is).

Literature, in which I'd include literary criticism and, in another argument, nearly everything in print, is in a realistic and rationalistic trap. And it will escape only when more than a very few endorse a position which to many will seem obstinately inhuman, a position which denies to all expressed forms of life, reality and history any status importantly different from the status usually given to fiction. To talk or to write is to fictionalize. And, more than that, to talk or to write about novels or poems or plays is only to re–fictionalize them. These propositions are scarcely new, but they are generally accepted only as part of some larger acknowledgements about language: that it is often felt to be inadequate to the pressure of something needing to be expressed, that to say anything is *not* to

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say something else at that moment. What I want to urge is some less casual assurance within the area of these generally accepted limitations. Insofar as they are available for discussion, life, reality and history exist only as discourse, and no form of discourse, as Santayana insisted, can *be* what it expresses; no form of discourse can *be* life, reality or history. Where is the Civil War and how do we know it? Where is Lyndon Johnson and how does anyone know him? Is he a history book, an epic poem or a cartoon by David Levine? Who invents Lyndon Johnson, when and for what immediate purpose? Think of the inventions that crumbled, of the new ones that emerged at the end of his speech of renunciation. Earlier, in one of his 1967 press conferences, his mannerisms, though unfamiliar in their variations and in his frightening relaxations, were reported in the press to be those, at last, of the "real" Johnson, the Johnson his friends had always known and of whom the public had never had a glimpse — after nearly thirty-seven years of public exposure! And what about Richard Nixon, the living schmoo? Where does the fiction end and the historical figure begin? By now, he has no idea himself, and he's still at it, still inventing a character for that greatest of all theatrical enterprises, the American electoral system.

No wonder anyone who cares about politics, especially anyone reading the script for 1968, finds the claims made for literature by most critics ridiculously presumptuous. Why should literature be considered the primary source of fictions, when fictions are produced at every press conference; why should novelists or dramatists be called "creative" when we have had Rusk and McNamara, the mothers of invention, "reporting" on the war in Vietnam? How do we know that war any more than we know Lyndon Johnson or Richard Nixon? Challenges to the fictional uniqueness of literature have come, oddly enough, from those most likely to suffer from the challenge — from the people, especially the novelists and dramatists, who create it. For some of these, the escape from the notion of a special status for literature has involved at least one kind of political stimulation: their occupational preferences for intricate fictional plots has been broadened by a Hegelian suspicion that the world itself is governed by self-generating political plots and conspiracies more intricate than any they could devise. Such is the logic of the "plotting" in Pynchon's *V.* and *The Crying of Lot 49* and of Mailer's *An American Dream.* Mailer's way of writing in that brilliant and almost wholly mis-

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understood book asks, in effect: what can I invent that the Kennedys haven't actually accomplished, what hyperboles are left to the imagination when reality is almost visibly exceeding any hyperboles? Small wonder that Mailer is a throwback not so much to D. H. Lawrence as to Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy.

Novelists and dramatists who want to compete with the invented world of contemporary politics or the daily news and who can't, like Mailer, turn the competition itself into news — such ambitious people might well decide with Carl Oglesby to give up the writing of fiction for political agitation. There aren't yet any instances where this choice has been especially self-denying or where it has proven ungenerous either to politics or to literature. Let talent for invention find its own opportunities. Literary culture is more likely to prosper by desertions from its ranks than from some current and preposterous inflations of its importance, like those implicit in George Steiner's castigations of literature for not saving us from Nazism. Remember that Proust caused the fall of France.

Literature has only one responsibility — to be interesting about its own inventions — and it can do this without paying much attention to alternative inventions coexisting under the titles of history, life, reality or politics. Indeed, there's plenty of evidence that writers who operate on the assumption that they live in a world of fictions are not denuded or depressed by the competition. Joyce and Nabokov derive their energies from it, and it sets in motion the creative powers of Jorge Borges, John Barth and Iris Murdoch, among others. Distinctions have to be made, however — nowhere in the works of the last three named, not even in the brilliant contrivances of Borges, is there a competitive response equal to the vitality of Joyce or Nabokov. Borges, Barth and Miss Murdoch, however different from one another in many respects, share a debilitating assumption: that it is interesting in and of itself to make the formal properties of fiction into the subject matter of fiction. While it isn't wholly uninteresting to do so, those readers most capable of appreciating the idea are also apt to be the most impatient with any lengthy demonstrations, with the repetitive effort, page after page, to show that literature is a hoax.

The intellectual prowess of Borges, Barth and Miss Murdoch isn't at all in question. They are perhaps more intellectually attuned, and they are surely more philosophically adroit, than all but a few of the

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exclusively literary critics now writing in America or Europe. But admiration for their thinking about literature must very often contend with the experience of reading their novels. They all show an amused and theoretical impatience with the fact that literary conventions deteriorate with the passage of time. And yet in a curious way their desire to show the factitiousness of these conventions is accompanied by an illusion that their own works exist not in time but in space, like a painting.

A novel is not a painting, however, and the perpetrated notion of similarity has a great deal to do with some of the innocent lies we tell ourselves about what it's like to read a book. Reading is a very special activity, quite different if not more arduous than looking intensely at a painting or listening to music. It is usually an altogether more sequestered act, taking hours or days during which our interest must be propelled forward by something promised in sounds and images. We sit in a favorite chair with a favorite light and some assurance of quiet, and we open, let us say, *Giles Goat-Boy*. Several days later we're probably no longer infatuated with repeated illustrations that literary and philosophical structures are really put-ons, that what we are doing is kind of silly. John Barth seems to me a writer of evident genius; I wrote a long and enthusiastic review of *Giles Goat-Boy* when it came out and I'd take none of it back now. Even while writing the review, however, I was conscious of forgetting what it had been like to read the book, what a confining, prolonged and often exasperating experience it had been. I'd often been bored and disengaged, and if I hadn't promised to review it I might not have finished it at all. To say this isn't really to disparage Barth or his achievement, surely not to anyone sufficiently honest about his own experience of "great" books. How many would ever finish *Moby Dick* — read all of it, I mean — or *Ulysses,* not to mention *Paradise Lost* or other monsters of that kind — if it weren't for school assignments, the academic equivalent of being asked to write a review? The university study of English and American literature, a quite recent phenomenon, totally obscures any of the conventional questions about the true audience for literary works. Without the academic compulsion which has forced *Ulysses* and *The Collected Poems of T. S. Eliot* onto the shelves of millions of near illiterates, what shape would the literature of this century have assumed? What would be considered the "important" books and what different myths would we accept

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now about the "modern world"? One reads and writes with something less than complete integrity. Partly because I felt that Barth, who hadn't yet been academically accepted, wasn't at all receiving his proper due, the fairest thing, given the options and the space, was to report that in reading the book I'd been witness to certain acts of genius, both of invention and of philosophical playfulness, and to make altogether less of the fact that I was often a bored witness.

It is an exasperating fact, then, that it takes such a lot of time, a part of one's life, to discover in some of the most demanding of contemporary fiction that its creators are as anxious to turn you off as to turn you on, that they want to show not the decisiveness but rather the triviality of literary structuring. Let's assume the triviality, but only because we then can insist all the more that fiction is something that has to be *made* interesting and that "life" is exhibited in the act of making. "We must," as James puts it, "grant the artist his subject, his idea, his donnée: our criticism is applied only to what he makes of it." On performance, on the excitement of doing, on what literature creates by way of fun — that's where more of the emphasis should be. Lawrence was right — if it isn't fun don't do it, and so, too, as I tried to show in *The Comic Sense of Henry James*, is the Preface to *The Golden Bowl*: "It all comes back to that, to my and your 'fun' — if we but allow the term its full extension; to the production of which no humblest question involved, even to that of the shade of a cadence or the position of a comma, is not richly pertinent."

Instead of hearing such standards from critics who now imagine themselves in the advanced guard, we mostly hear only irritable versions of William Dean Howells. It's charming as well as amusing that Howells' standards are especially in vogue, without acknowledgment or awareness, among the self-proclaimed champions of "what's happening." The only difference between Howells and them is not in critical standards, but in decisions about the shapes of American reality. Substitute the word "underground" for "smiling aspects" of American life, and Howells will seem out of touch only in his concept of reality, not in his literary criteria. In any case, he expected that reality, as he conceived it, would become dated. He knew it would be changed by time, and he was naïve only in believing that time would change it for the better. Maybe the best clue to what he was up to — and to

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his peculiarly modern tedium — is in his blandness about the workings of time. Knowing that its mere passage can dispel any dramatic accumulations, any gatherings of disaster, that even the chance operations of daily living, like a good breakfast or a change in the weather, can ameliorate the anguish of romance or failure, he actually tried to make his novels duller than they potentially needed to have been. Time does indeed give the lie to the imagination of apocalypse or endings, and in this conviction Howells is apt to seem especially, if eccentrically, a precursor of some contemporary fashions. This is hardly a reason to revive interest in most of his novels, however. He achieved what he called "the art of not arriving" — of not reaching for melodramatic and symbolic summaries — at disastrous cost for any continuing interest in most of his fiction. What he did was done out of literary convictions that are a child's version of novelistic practices like those of Iris Murdoch in *The Red and the Green*: if novels are to be like life, she tediously insists, then of course they should foreswear any "false" shapings of material toward a prescribed and therefore unnecessarily fictitious finale.

Howells' parodies of literary summation, his refusal to exploit the dramatic heightening of the forces he brings into play (as in the little masterpiece *Indian Summer,* where past and present, youth and age, Italy and America are given a nearly Jamesian development), his opposition to whatever he recognized as belonging to literary romance — these reticences are all at the service of "reality" and "American life." Until the mid-eighties he couldn't see that what he called reality and American life were fictions manufactured out of his own placid and uninterrupted personal success. He read his life as the history of his times. But again, was he much different, in his way of proceeding, from critics who now celebrate the fact, as did Zola in his novels about the various industries and occupations, that a new book has at last "made available" some aspect of reality hitherto sequestered? The novel has been called many things, but is it at last only a procurer? It was for this reason, among others, that Leslie Fiedler praised *The Sot-Weed Factor*: it made, said Fiedler, Western Maryland available to American fiction. And it is for this kind of accomplishment, too, that Joyce has become academically digestible: for the yield of meanings *now* recognized as reality. As a result, Joyce has seldom been given credit for his real and heroic achievement: as a writer who parodies the very productions of

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meaning even as he enthusiastically moves on to new modes of production.

The risks inherent in self-parody can't be ignored, however, even in *Ulysses*. It, too, is at times boring on purpose and for too long. Who can deny a tedious lack of economy in Joyce — or in Beckett or Borges, Burroughs or Barth — an overindulgence in mostly formal displays where little more is accomplished than a repetitive exposure of some blatantly obtuse formal arrangement? In *Ulysses* the so-called "Aeolus" and "Oxen of the Sun" episodes are instances, the former being an early version of Burroughs' "cut-ups." But the *longeurs* in Joyce are relieved by his participation in momentary acts of faith: he participates in the productive illusions of Bloom and Molly and in the nostalgia of Stephen Dedalus for the possible saving grace of institutions whose impotence he is also exposing. So that while he seems more often than not to subscribe to the credo of Barth's hero in *The Floating Opera* — "Nothing is of intrinsic value" — Joyce is never as happy as Barth with the necessities of novelistically enacting it. It can be rendered in fiction mostly by the deflations of any heroic (or Homeric) claim to the world. No wonder efforts to project a self of historical consequence are largely missing or the object of mockery in the literature of self-parody. Plots seldom issue as they do in earlier fiction, from the interplay and pressure of individual human actions. Notably in such recent examples as Pynchon and Heller, plot can be said to exist prior to the book. It's a self-generating, even possibly self-generated formula of myths and conspiracies whose source is as mysterious as the source of life itself, and within it characters try, often vainly, to find a role, or to find any possible human tie not implicated in the impersonality of the plot. And the role of the novelist in the book is equally insecure — what is Joyce's style, where is his voice in *Ulysses?* Within the vastness of *V.* is there any locatable presence of Thomas Pynchon? The novelist in such instances is the distracted servant to servants, discovering that none of his material is original, none of it truly his, none of it derived from any state of "nature" or "life." Life, even before the novelist proposes to represent it, exists, it would seem, in the conditions and shapes imposed upon it by art, by the pastoral, allegorical, epic, narrative, political imaginations, all as much as by the myths and rituals that are the accompaniment of nationality and religion.

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The literature of self-parody is bound by its allegiance, minute by minute, to the passage of time. Its practitioners are doing what Griffith thought of doing with his camera: of holding it on a scene so long that the scene would have to break up. Hold the camera, that is, on the noble rider until he climbs down, and after the hilarity of watching a line of men fall into an open manhole, keep your camera there until they have to crawl out, bloody, bruised and half-conscious. The passage of time distorts any shapes proposed by art, and this has by now become a major theme of literature no less than of painting and film. Necessarily, the theme belongs to artists of a classic rather than a romantic inclination, to writers as obsessively cultured as Joyce or Eliot, as incredibly read as Borges, as learned as Barth, as encyclopedic as Pynchon. They are all, to different degrees, burdened with the wastes of time, with cultural shards and rubbish. Joyce's great theme, finally, is that the mind, the conservative and responsible mind, can hold its contents only by acts of perverse and mechanical will. In *Ulysses* Joyce's own acts of historical and literary recollection are exposed to the modifications that are the inescapable result of their being inserted into the passage of time, here and now. It is as if Joyce wanted to show why it is no longer possible to be a poet in the sense proposed by Kierkegaard. It is no longer possible, that is, to be a happy genius of recollection, striving day and night "against the cunning of oblivion which would trick him," says Kierkegaard in *Fear and Trembling,* "out of his hero."

In assessing the grandeur of Joyce's achievement as against that of any writer since, one has to consider the scale of the objects which provoked his memory and the sufferings of memory. The kind of object that excites memory need make no difference to its intensity: in that respect the Catholic Church is no more imposing than a fishing trip to the Big Two-Hearted River. But the nature of the object can make a considerable difference to the texture of prose. Nostalgia for the Church can easily pass beyond personal deprivations to incorporate, by images and styles derived from it, the supposed agony of a culture facing the horrors of institutional collapse. The failure of endurance in institutions has a literary analogue in those works of literature which expose their own shapings to the dilapidating effects of duration. Nostalgia for lost or desiderated orders that once let a writer participate in a cultural or social complex — such nostalgia gives enormously richer pathos to the self-

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parody of Joyce or Nabokov or Borges than it does to Barth or Iris Murdoch. (Pynchon seems to me to succeed in making such orders out of the cults of young people of the sixties, a remarkable thing to have done. He shows us how a favorite bar or a prospect of Los Angeles can now have some of the resonance of a cultural tradition.)

The limited durability of any sense-making structures bedevils the careers of Joyce's characters, but he feels it himself even more acutely in his career within any particular book. The drama of *Ulysses* is only incidently that of Stephen, Bloom and Molly; more poignantly it is the drama of Joyce himself making the book. The fact that the many and various techniques in the chapters of *Ulysses* are made to appear forced, superimposed and mechanical, that each in turn is dispensed with so that another might be tried — this fact in itself constitutes the drama of the novel. Joyce enacts by his performance in the book the problem which is felt with a sentimental enervation by Stephen: the problem of being unable to build, as it's phrased in *A Portrait,* ". . . breakwaters of order and elegance against the sordid tide of life." It's a mistake, I think, to assume that the last section, Molly Bloom's soliloquy, is meant either to represent the disorganized flow of that life or that it constitutes some sort of Joycean affirmation. Molly is merely saying "yes" to whatever has happened to her. Because of the increasingly tight organizational schemes of the immediately preceding sections, this last one does seem free of at least punctuational barriers to the flow of life independent of time. But like all other sections of the book, it takes its form from a compulsive feeling about the ravages of time, a compulsive recollection.

Time in Molly's soliloquy has eroded not the great schemas of western civilization or even the lesser ones of the modern city. It has instead begun to lay waste to the body of a very human woman in the early middle ages of her life. Molly's self-consciousness about sex should be thought of no differently from Joyce's self-consciousness about the institutions that appeal to his imagination. In both cases, recollection has become the subject of nostalgic jokes, of longing chastened by a nervous confidence in the salvation afforded by some present or anticipated performance. There are analogues in Bloom thinking of Rudy and being pacified by his saving of Stephen at the end of the Circe episode, in Stephen thinking about the Church he has disowned and living with unacceptable substitutes for it — the

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blasphemies and medical logic of Buck, the myths of Pateresque art — and in Joyce making parodies now of one structural organization, now of another, and discovering in the process that he exults in and must parody his own fiction-making powers.

Creation follows the discovery of waste in things that once seemed creative. What was once reality, like God, has become, under the pressure of time, a fiction strong enough only to promote the nostalgia out of which, in reaction, new fictions, new excuses for the assertion of life can then issue. Joyce not only initiates a tradition of self–parody now conspicuously at work in literature; he simultaneously passes beyond it into something which writers of the present and future have still to emulate. He is not at all satisfied merely with demonstrating that any effort at the creation of shapes is an exercise in factitiousness. Instead, he is elated and spurred by this discovery; he responds not by the contemplation of futility or with ironies about human invention and its waste, but with wonder at the human power to create and then to create again under the acknowledged aegis of death.

A roughly similar substitution of fresh fictions for those lost "realities" which have themselves been exposed as fictional is at the center of Nabokov's novelistic and autobiographical writings. But it is a mistake to say, as most commentators have, that he "believes" in aesthetic form: he would in the first place have had to believe in the reality for which aesthetic form is the proposed substitute. Having dispensed with the idea of any articulated nonfictive reality, why then turn for reality to fictions? Instead, Nabokov, like Joyce, is led to parody of the very activities in which they both persist. By no accident, the hero of one is a would-be artist, while many of Nabokov's heroes are writers, some of whom, like Humbert Humbert in *Lolita,* actually record for us an autobiography which they now recognize to have been a fiction. Reality, Nabokov once said, is "an infinite succession of levels, levels of perception, false bottoms and hence unquenchable, unattainable." Like Joyce, he directly parodies traditional forms such as melodrama, critical analysis in *Pale Fire,* the mystery story in *Laughter in the Dark,* the definitive biography in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* — and all of these parodies are intended to expose the deadness of characters who express themselves in obedience to some literary mode, who follow what Nabokov calls an "adopted method."

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But Nabokov does not write parody merely to show that "an adopted method" is more remote from reality than is some method devised by him or by his characters. His other-directed parody merely clears the ground and establishes some of the criteria for a parody of the creativity being exercised in his own works. The parody in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* or *Lolita* or *Pale Fire* is directed at his authorial as much as at his characters' efforts to make others believe in the reality of schemes, plots, games, deceptions. His is a parody of an extraordinarily compassionate kind, resisting all but the most delicate translation into interpretive language. Unfortunately, nearly all of his interpreters are hung up on the formulas of art-life, fiction-reality, even though Nabokov is unusually impatient with such distinctions. Humbert is not an example of a man victimized by mistaking art for reality or for living in a relationship that violates the limitations of time and physical nature. These things may be said, of course, and they are true, just as it is true that King Lear had a bad temper. It is possible to be right and stupid, and such a way of being right about Humbert thwarts precisely those responses — of fascination, affection, bewilderment and awe — that Humbert and Nabokov call for. We are faced, to put it another way, with a performed "thing," existing in spite of the realities and moralities anyone can propose against it. That's true for the book as much as for the career of Humbert. Performance creates more life and reality than do any of the fictions opposed to it either by readers, as against Nabokov, by other characters, like Quilty as against Humbert, or by America, to whose fictions the book gives a guided transcontinental tour. When it comes to living there is nothing in Nabokov other than games and fiction to live by; when it comes to dying or to the passage of time, then all fictions are equally good and equally useless. Nabokov can only be as explicit about these matters as his own living, his own insatiable taste for fictions, allows him to be, and he is quite capable of proposing, as Borges more assertively does, that he has dreamed even himself into existence and that, biggest joke of all, he comes into existence, for himself and for us, only by expressing himself in fiction.

Borges pushes this parody of creation to its furthest limits. He altogether obliterates any distinction between fiction and the analysis of it, thereby unabashedly making into his subject matter what I've suggested is always implicit in the literature of self-parody: that it is

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necessarily a species of critical analysis. Instead of writing novels, he pretends that they already exist: he therefore offers only resumé and commentary. Sometimes confining himself to specific books, as in his essay on "The Approach to Al-Mu-tasim" (a novel ascribed to a Bombay lawyer named Mir Bahadur Ali), he can also invent whole canons by fictitious authors, as in "An Examination of the Works of Herbert Quain," which begins with some wonderfully accurate parody of Leavisite literary invective. And the parody of literary creation extends even to books that do exist, as in "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*." Parody of creation cannot go further, except for blank pages, than the pretension that a work of creation does exist when it doesn't or the claim that a classic belongs to anyone who cares later to imagine that he wrote it. One of his most ambitious pieces is "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius." Written in the manner of a geographic history, and thus a literary parody to begin with, it describes an unknown planet with "its architectures and quarrells, with the terror of its mythologies and the uproar of its languages, its emperors and seas, its minerals and birds and fish, its algebra and fire, its theological and metaphysical controversies." This invention of a new world is a little like Swift, closer to Kafka, and a preparation for Pynchon's Tristero system in *The Crying of Lot 49* and for the West Campus of Barth's *Giles Goat-Boy*.

Like these invented worlds and systems, the Tlön of Borges' story is apparently the work of a cabalistic group of astronomers, biologists, engineers, metaphysicians, poets, chemists, mathematicians, moralists, painters and geometricians, all under the supervision of "an unknown genius." When a reporter from the Nashville, Tennessee *American* chances upon the forty-volume *First Encyclopedia of Tlön* in a Memphis library, where it was probably planted by an agent of the cabal,

> The international press infinitely proclaimed the "find." Manuals, anthologies, summaries, literal versions, authorized re-editions and pirated editions of the Greatest Work of Man flooded and still flood the earth. Almost immediately, reality yielded on more than one account. The truth is that it longed to yield. Ten years ago any symmetry with a semblance of order — dialectical materialism, anti-Semitism, Nazism — was sufficient to entrance the minds of men. How could one do other than submit to Tlön, to the minute

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> and vast evidence of an orderly planet? It is useless, but in accordance with divine laws — I translate: inhuman laws — which we never quite grasp. Tlön is surely a labyrinth, but it is a labyrinth devised by men, a labyrinth destined to be deciphered by men.

The joke, if it might be called one, is that any inventiveness thorough enough, any inventiveness that can be made into a "strict, systematic plan" can take over the world. And why? Because the existent reality by which the world is governed is itself only an alternate invention. One point of the joke is that if invention is probably endless, forever displacing itself, if the most solid-seeming contrivance is merely contingent, then literature, Borges' own writing and especially this piece of writing, is merely the most trivial and expendable form of fiction-making.

In fact, literature is only incidentally the object of Borges' parody, as we see even more plainly in the text which Michel Foucault says inspired his *Les Mots et les Choses*. In this text Borges quotes "a certain Chinese encyclopedia" where it is written that " 'Animals are divided into a) belonging to the Emperor, b) embalmed, c) tamed, d) suckling pigs, e) sirens, f) fabulous, g) dogs at liberty, h) included in the present classification, i) which act like madmen, j) innumerable, k) drawn with a very fine camels' hair brush, l) et cetera, m) which have just broken jugs, n) which from afar look like flies." What fascinates Foucault in this passage is that the exotic charm of another system of thought can so far expose the limitations of our own. But I think Borges is being more foxy than that: he won't allow *any* element of this or of any of his texts, not even the inferred standards behind his verbal parodies, to become stabilized or authoritative. Borges himself can't be located in most of his writing and we're instead engaged by relatively anonymous narrators. These, while instrumental to Borges' parody, are also its object, much as is Joyce's nameless narrator within the complex of parodies in the Cyclops episode of *Ulysses*. Self-enclosed and remotely special in their interests, Borges' narrators are concerned with essentially cabalistic facts and systems of very questionable derivation. Everything in his texts is, in the literal sense of the word, eccentric: he is a writer with no center, playing off, one against the other, all those elements in his work which aspire to centrality. Thus, while the division of animals in "a certain Chinese encyclopedia"

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does indeed make currently accepted divisions seem tiresomely arbitrary, the effect of its utterly zany yet precise enumeration is to momentarily collapse our faith in taxonomy altogether, to free us from assumptions that govern the making of classifications, including those of an encyclopedia of no verifiable existence. Self-parody in Borges, as in Joyce and Nabokov, goes beyond the mere questioning of the validity of any given invention by proposing the unimpeded opportunity for making new ones.

Invention creates life in literature in the sense that invention is itself the act and evidence of life. It is a way of being present, in every sense of that word. Borges is for my taste too little concerned with the glory of the human presence within the wastes of time, with human agencies of invention, with Christs, and he is too exclusively amused by the careers of competing systems, the failed potencies of techniques and structures. We remember the point of his texts, especially since it is so often the same point, but he gives us no people to remember or care about. Our greatest invention so far remains ourselves, what we call human beings, and enough inventing of that phenomenon still goes on to make the destiny of persons altogether more compelling in literature than the destiny of systems or of literary modes. Nothing we have created, in politics or literature, is necessary — that is the central aspect of the literature of self-parody which humanly matters.

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COLUMBIA: SEVEN INTERVIEWS

Stephen Donadio

Immanuel Wallerstein

INTERVIEWER: What do you regard as the most important issue in the Columbia conflict? That is, what issue do you think best defines the kind of conflict it is?

WALLERSTEIN: I think there have been three fundamental issues that have been of varying degrees of concern to different participants. One issue has to do with the nature of our society in general: in particular, its foreign policy and defense commitments around the world — in Vietnam, especially — and the University's implication, connection with, those policies and commitments. This is the IDA issue.

The second issue has to do with the relationship of the University to an ongoing social problem of our society: racism, the upsurge of the black community and the way in which the university — as an institution — impinges upon this problem quite directly. This is the gymnasium issue.

The third issue has been how the University is governed internally and to what extent norms of democracy are meaningful within a nonstate institution.

Now various people have placed different emphases on these issues. I myself think the second and third are far more important than the first. Not that I don't think the Vietnam issue is a very fundamental issue. It's just that I think that to make the university the prime object of one's political activity relating to Vietnam is a clear displacement of concern which is politically largely irrelevant.

Columbia University, however, is a major institution in the City of New York. It *is* expanding physically. It *does* impinge upon the problems of the black community. That is a direct issue and the gym symbolized that, and I think probably that I would place it in my own concerns as issue Number One. And I would say issue Number Two, which was not really a very active issue before this crisis, has been how the University is run, and obviously a lot of future concern is going to focus on this issue.

INTERVIEWER: In view of the personalities and issues involved in the Columbia dispute, and in light of all that has taken place during the past few weeks, do you now feel that mediation by the faculty was ever a real possibility?

Immanuel Wallerstein, Associate Professor of Sociology at Columbia University, was a member of the steering committee of the original Ad Hoc Faculty Group, and served as that group's representative to the black students in Hamilton Hall. He later served as the first Executive Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Faculty.

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WALLERSTEIN: If you are asking me whether the chances were ever particularly high that faculty mediation would have succeeded, I would say, in retrospect, no. That is to say, for various reasons the positions of the Administration and of the Strike Steering Committee, as well as that of the black students in Hamilton Hall, were relatively intransigent on certain fundamental issues. That became quite clear to the Ad Hoc Faculty Group and we stated it publicly. It was very hard to compromise on those issues.

But in retrospect I also think that the whole situation would have been far worse had there not been an attempt at mediation. The attempt at mediation — even though it failed — is one of the things that kept the university from collapsing even more than it did.

INTERVIEWER: Given the intransigence you spoke of, do you now think that it would have been possible or proper at any particular point for the faculty to resolve the conflict one way or another by aligning itself decisively with one side or the other?

WALLERSTEIN: If you're really asking me if the Ad Hoc Faculty Group should have done things differently — in gross, not in minor detail — I would say no. I think it acted properly. I think that the resolution of the Ad Hoc Faculty Group, which it proposed to all parties, was a sound, workable resolution of the conflict which met the demands of substantive justice of the students while meeting some of the demands of respect for the norms of the institution which the Administration was putting forward. I think these were sound proposals. I'm sorry they weren't accepted and I would still stand by them.

INTERVIEWER: From the outset, the student demonstrators at Columbia have demanded amnesty as a precondition to negotiations. What do you think is involved in the amnesty issue? And have your feelings about this issue changed at all during the course of events?

WALLERSTEIN: I originally thought that the amnesty demand was a very curious demand since if the students were challenging the legitimacy of the institution then it was very curious for them to turn around and ask that institution to accord them amnesty, which is a process of forgiveness and which assumes the legitimacy of the institution granting it. I thought that position was incredibly inconsistent politically.

Nevertheless, amnesty spoke to a theme to which I, for one, was interested in giving some primacy but to which neither the students nor the Administration gave primacy, and that is the theme of the university as a community, as a *Gemeinschaft*, as something to which people belong despite many other kinds of political differences. Given my position that the university is a moral community, I myself wouldn't have ruled out amnesty as a possibility. But I had to take into account what would, under the circumstances, maximize the possibility of recreating the moral community of the university and I thought, given everything, given the passions on all sides, that amnesty was not wise and not desirable.

At various points I changed my mind: for example, immediately following the April 30th police action, I felt that the balance of hurts had shifted in the University. And in the light of the same concept of

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recreating the moral community, that was a moment when I would have favored amnesty. At still further points I thought the balance had shifted again. In other words, for me the issue of amnesty was a pragmatic issue within my own moral context which I was willing to consider but to which I was largely opposed out of my pragmatic reading of the situation.

INTERVIEWER: How important do you think the race issue has been in this crisis? That is, do you think that the situation would have been easier to deal with if the black students had not barricaded themselves in Hamilton Hall after asking the white students to leave?

WALLERSTEIN: If you dropped the word "easier," I could answer the question: that is to say, I think the situation would have been entirely different. I do not think there would have been a crisis at Columbia had there not been a race issue. I don't believe for a moment that the SDS talking about IDA could have escalated the University into the kind of crisis it found itself in. I think the fact is that when the black students barricaded Hamilton Hall, *that* transformed the situation. *That* was the critical issue. That explains why the University didn't use force that first morning on the 24th. If it had just been Mark Rudd and his friends going into Low Memorial Library, we would have had the police on campus in thirty minutes. There's no question about it: it would have been an unpleasant but minor fracas in the University had there not been black students who barricaded Hamilton Hall.

I don't mean to say that people weren't genuinely concerned with what I call the two other issues — our position in the world, in Vietnam in particular; and the governance of the University. But I don't think people would have been willing to use the kinds of all-out struggle methods that they did use for those other two issues — or they wouldn't have had they not known that, simultaneously, the black students were pushing the other issue.

INTERVIEWER: In the period preceding the first bust, representatives of the Ad Hoc Faculty Group were apparently attempting to persuade some students to come out of some of the occupied buildings. Were there any indications then that under certain conditions some of the students would have been willing to leave some of the buildings?

WALLERSTEIN: I'm not sure what you're referring to. The Ad Hoc Faculty Group, as a group, was not making separate efforts to persuade subgroups of students. Now it is true that among the Strike Steering Committee there were representatives of four buildings with nuances of points of view, and many of them were anxious and willing to speak to various faculty members. But there was no systematic attempt by the Ad Hoc Faculty Group to negotiate separately with various groups of students.

There were, of course, the famous Fayerweather proposals, which accepted the faculty position on amnesty basically, and stayed with the other positions. I think the Fayerweather proposals came fairly close to the Ad Hoc Faculty Group's position, because after all, we did call for a cessation on the gym, and we did call for ultimate judicial authority to be taken out of the hands of the President and put in the hands of the Tripartite Commission. But the Fayerweather

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proposals were not the basis for a separate settlement, because the Fayerweather students felt that they wished to maintain solidarity with the students in the other buildings. And I myself never thought at any point that it was really possible to bring any substantial number of the students out without bringing all of them out.

INTERVIEWER: Why did the original Ad Hoc Faculty Group dissolve on the morning after the first bust?

WALLERSTEIN: It's not clear that it ever did anything as positive as dissolving.

INTERVIEWER: What happened to it?

WALLERSTEIN: Well, that's . . . there we were on the stage of McMillin with a resolution and a large audience. There was considerable debate about this resolution.[1] The chairman of the meeting [Alan Westin] decided, in effect, that he had not given sufficient thought to the implications of the resolution when he had presented it, and announced that he would withdraw from the meeting. After a certain amount of confusion on stage, he repeated this announcement; he then withdrew from the meeting. And members of the steering committee of the Ad Hoc Faculty Group who were seated on the stage with him — with whom he had not consulted — withdrew also: in large part, I assume, simply because they felt that they wanted to talk about the implications of what had happened. There was, therefore, no concerted decision on anybody's part to leave the stage — except the chairman's.

Now the steering committee did in fact meet at three o'clock that afternoon (the walk off the stage had occurred at about 1 to 1:30 P.M.). At that time, the members all expressed their views as to where they thought things were and they decided that they ought to talk further about what the role of the Ad Hoc Faculty Group would be, given the changed situation at the University. They were going to meet later that same evening. But at 4 P.M., the meeting of the Joint Faculties of Morningside Heights was held, and at that meeting the resolution creating the Executive Committee of the Faculty was passed. Four members of the steering committee of the Ad Hoc Faculty Group were among the ten who were named to the new Executive Committee of the Faculty in that resolution, including the chairman [Alan Westin]. And so, the Ad Hoc Faculty Group steering committee did not meet later that evening; and they never met again.

There would seem to be, in effect, two kinds of successor groups to it. For a time there was another group which called itself

1 The mass police action which cleared the occupied buildings took place in the early hours of April 30. Later that morning a stormy meeting of the Ad Hoc Group was held in McMillin Theatre; this meeting was attended by a large number of faculty members who had not previously participated in the Group's activities. At that meeting, after a number of medical reports had been presented, Alan Westin read a fairly strong resolution expressing the Group's distress at the manner in which the Administration had handled the situation, and declaring the Group's intention to "respect" the student strike which had just been called. (At that point, one of the announced objectives of the strike was the resignation of President Kirk and Vice-President Truman.)

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at some points the Ad Hoc Faculty Group, but at other points the Ad Hoc Faculty-Student Group. That was the group that kept meeting at McMillin for another day or two.

INTERVIEWER: The one that Eric Bentley and Professor [Marvin] Harris were associated with?

WALLERSTEIN: Yes. And then there's the other group which was really organized around and by those members of the steering committee of the original Ad Hoc Faculty Group who were not named to the Executive Committee of the Faculty: this group became the Independent Faculty Group, which I consider in many senses the real moral successor to the Ad Hoc Faculty Group. Certainly its tone and its positions are roughly the same.

INTERVIEWER: How would you define the function of the current Executive Committee of the Faculty? How far do its powers extend?

WALLERSTEIN: Well, the Executive Committee of the Faculty is, first of all, a formal faculty group, unlike all these others. It was created partly because there was no formal faculty group, partly because there was a desire on the part of the faculty to continue to play a role in the immediate crisis. The Executive Committee of the Faculty, formally representing the faculty, was obviously bound to be a somewhat more conservative institution than the Ad Hoc Faculty Group. (If you look at the biographies of the people who are actually members of it, and you look at what they were doing between April 23 and April 30, you will see that some of them were at the Ad Hoc Faculty Group meetings, some were not. One or two of them were considered to be reasonably strong supporters of the Administration in that earlier period.) Nonetheless, the Executive Committee of the Faculty has in many ways played a mediating role, if somewhat less overtly. It has attempted to represent the faculty, as distinct from both the Administration and the students, in the continuing crisis of the University. It has created a certain direct relationship with the Trustees. It has received a mandate from the Trustees to play a role in recommending changes in the basic structure of the University — and the Executive Committee certainly has made this its primary concern. There's no question of that. If you analyze what they've done, they have in effect said, "the most important thing now is to reconstruct the university."

I think they'll play a rather significant role in that respect and I think that had they not been in existence, it's quite probable that the confrontations between the Administration and the student body would have escalated out of all proportion in these last few weeks.

INTERVIEWER: As you know, the Joint Committee on Disciplinary Affairs declared that its recommendations regarding student discipline were predicated on the assumption that the Administration would drop criminal trespass charges against the demonstrators. To your knowledge, has the University Administration made any serious attempt to have criminal trespass proceedings against the student demonstrators dropped?

WALLERSTEIN: They have a very clear position. The Administration and the Trustees have stated that they will not in general seek to drop these charges, that they will seek to drop the charges only in those

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cases where there are mitigating circumstances. To my knowledge they have moved in a few cases of so-called mitigating circumstances ("mitigating circumstances," as far as I can see, amount to errors of various kinds.) But the University has not committed itself to any principle of general leniency.

I might say I deplore this. I think the University should have moved, should still move, to drop the charges of criminal trespass: first, because its own moral position is too weak for it to allow itself to be in the position of moral accuser; and second, for the pragmatic reason of re-creating the bonds of the University.

INTERVIEWER: In view of the fact that suspension in many cases renders a student immediately subject to the draft, how do you regard the Administration's recent decision to suspend for a year or longer many students arrested during the reoccupation of Hamilton Hall?

WALLERSTEIN: Well, basically I'm very unhappy about it, and I would not have done that had I been the University Administration. As a move taken by itself, I suppose you can find all sorts of justification for it. Taken in the larger context of the crisis at the University, however, and in view of the fact that the University has not yet moved definitively to answer the demands of substantive justice, I think that it was morally imprudent for the Administration to have moved so strongly.

But I do not think that the students were justified in reoccupying Hamilton Hall on May 21-22. I think it was both a strategic and a tactical error on their part. It has lost them a good deal. I do think that a case can be made for the fact that there was perhaps a certain amount of provocation involved, but political tactics — wise political tactics — involve knowing when to resist provocation.

INTERVIEWER: Many faculty members seem to support the so-called substantive demands made by the demonstrators: for example, severance of all institutional ties with IDA, termination of the gym construction, etc. What do think faculty members who take such a position should do at this point? Do you think that it would be sufficient — that is, effective — for them to announce their support of these demands through petitions, etc.? Or do you think some further action may be required on their part?

WALLERSTEIN: I think they should work by every means at their command to realize these objectives. Petitions are only one such method. I'm a great believer that the object in politics is to win your demands; so if I set myself a whole series of demands, I look around for the methods by which I can maximize the likelihood that I'll win them.

On the IDA issue I think it won't be hard to win many of these demands. That's why I thought they were so unimportant, frankly: the University could meet all the demands that SDS could ever dream of on all the issues relating to Vietnam and that wouldn't change the situation in Vietnam one bit. As for the issues involving the relationship with the community, I think there's going to be a long, hard process of political education and political struggle that will go on at Columbia for the next five to ten years. I was involved in it before the crisis as chairman of the Faculty Civil Rights Group and

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I remain involved in it now. I don't think this is something you win in a day. It has to do with the fundamental outlook of Columbia as an institution in American society. It has to do with the sources of funding of the University. It has to do with the composition of its membership, both faculty and students. It has to do with an awful lot of hard questions, and I don't say hard questions because they need a lot of study, but because they'll take a lot of time to resolve because we've got clashes of rather strong and fundamental forces here.

On the issues relating to the governance of the University, I think here you can say we're in luck. That is to say, there's no question that the students have — when all is said and done, and whatever anyone feels about what they did — they have made it possible in a way that it was simply not possible six months ago to talk about changing fundamental structures in the University. I think people should profit by this and press hard for their points of view — and there are many points of view here, from those that come pretty close to the status quo to absolutely radical ideas of what a university ought to be like. We are now in the midst of a sort of two-year constitutional convention. That's what it amounts to. And that comes rarely in the life of a major institution.

Peter Gay

INTERVIEWER: Professor Gay, to what extent and in what sense would you regard the conflict at Columbia as a political conflict?

GAY: Well, my first instinct was to regard it as a mixture of politics for some and acting out of very considerable frustrations for others. A great many of the people who acted were not specifically political in their motivations; one of the remarkable things about what is called the "confrontation" on campus, has been how often people have changed their minds about what was really important.

People would tell you that it was our involvement in the war through IDA, or our so-called racism through the building of the gym, or in turn we would be told that it was really a wider political matter having to do with restructuring American society — an attack on capitalism as such. Still others would argue that the gym and IDA were important not so much because they were symbols for the war and for the problems of civil rights and so on, but rather because they were symbols of the failure of the University Administration to communicate, to deal openly with the faculty or to consult students. So I think that if you want to use the word "political" in this context, you have to use it in a number of different senses.

INTERVIEWER: Given the positions taken by the Administration and the student demonstrators in this dispute, do you feel that mediation by the faculty was ever a real possibility?

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GAY: Well, I disagree on this point with a great many people whom I respect. I did not think so from the beginning. I spoke privately to a good many people who were leaders among the mediators and my impression from the very beginning was that they were attempting to set up an unreal situation — that is, they were treating it as though it were, let's say, a labor dispute between equals: union on one side, management on the other. In fact, the situation never even remotely resembled this. There were students illegally occupying buildings; it was understood that sooner or later they would have to get out. And on the other side there was the Administration which, however unjust or unpopular it might be, was nevertheless the legitimate power. Under these circumstances, it seemed to me, for the faculty to put itself in the middle, as though the students and Administration were two equals confronting one another, was really a tactical and I think in the long run a strategic mistake.

With all due respect to the leaders of the Ad Hoc Group (many of whom were certainly people of great good will motivated by genuine humanitarian concern for the welfare of the students) I think that in the process of their attempt to set up the kind of situation I've just described, two things happened. The first was that the actual legal and I think even the moral situation was distorted; and second, in consequence of this, a number of students who were not in any way political but considered themselves allied to SDS for the moment were really hardened in their determination to stay in the buildings. I talked to a number of the students afterward and they themselves said that a number of these faculty of good will had really misled them.

And so I think that a number of the Ad Hoc Group, even though they tried to make their own position clear, did not manage to convey the real situation to the students: first of all, as to the extent of the sympathy for the students among the faculty; and secondly, as to the amount of power the sympathetic faculty might actually have to prevent the police from taking over. Now it is true of course that the faculty did develop a fair amount of power in the course of events: when, Thursday night — early Friday morning — the police were actually first called, it was a group of angry faculty members that compelled or persuaded the Administration to change its mind and to rescind the order. So it is certainly true that they had some power. But they appeared to have more power and more sympathy than in fact they had and they seemed able to deliver something they never could deliver. And so, without wishing to denigrate their efforts, I would have to say that it does seem to me that the Ad Hoc Group hardened the lines of division and stiffened resistance.

INTERVIEWER: How do you feel about the distinction people have made between the demands of the demonstrators and their tactics?

GAY: I think the distinction has to be made; it is in fact essential to any discussion of the political consequences of such events as these. As one of my colleagues, Richard Hofstadter, put it in one of his talks before students, democracy is essentially procedural and what matters is not so much (important though it may be) what a given policy is as how it is arrived at, because certain other consequences will always follow from methods used.

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Throughout that first week we heard a good deal of talk about the possible takeover of buildings by, say, right-wing students who might wish to enforce demands such as who knows what? — athletic scholarships or other demands of that kind. Now this example, which became a cliché, was designed to show that these methods could be used by anyone, and to function as a warning against the amoral if not immoral conclusion that if one liked the aims, one must support these unfortunate tactics. This is something that I was certainly never willing to accept.

On the other hand, the complexity involved in dividing tactics from aims in this case is suggested by the rebuttal that's been made by a good number of students and some of my colleagues: namely, that all other tactics had in fact failed. This is a very difficult argument to answer, really, and I am very uncomfortable about it myself, because after all, if all peaceful methods are demonstrably failures, what then are you going to do? Are you going to say, "We give up whatever demands we have; we will leave this university or we will let this university do what it likes?" Or, will you then say, "Well, in this case we will use means that *are* effective"? This of course is the tragedy of the liberal in any case: he always does get stuck on this dilemma. And I envy those who have simple answers to it, I must say. I myself still think that the students had to be got out of the buildings one way or another. Another method would obviously have been much preferable to the one that was finally used, but I think the students had to be got out.

INTERVIEWER: From the outset the student demonstrators at Columbia have demanded amnesty as a precondition to negotiations. What do you think is involved in the amnesty issue?

GAY: Like everything else, this is a hard question; but I said publicly that it did seem to me that the behavior of the student leaders, and of those faculty members, for that matter, who insisted on amnesty (and that was never, by the way, a very large group), was, technically speaking, infantile. That is to say, it attempted to effect a certain result and not in any way to pay for it. It attempted to offend authority and perhaps even overthrow it — at least for the time being — without ever being punished for it.

And it seems to me that this along with some other manifestations of collective behavior was really childish: the inability, for example, to wait, to postpone gratification. These matters seem to me to be more open to psychoanalytical than to sociological or political investigation. From that point of view the demand for amnesty struck me as inherently self-contradictory. It was an attempt to admit on the one hand that some wrong had been done and, for that matter, against an authority that was either despised or continually called illegitimate, and on the other hand to be told by that authority which was either bad or illegitimate that really it was a forgiving kind of authority.

I think that civil disobedience is an adult activity and not an infantile activity and it should take upon itself whatever consequences it may have. (This was certainly true in the case of Gandhi or of Martin Luther King.) No organized society can operate without this principle; no political theorist I know, not even the most pluralistic

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theorist, has ever accepted the notion that it is up to the individual simply to accept those laws he likes and use his dislike of laws or his claim that they are unjust as sufficient grounds for not obeying them without paying some price.

The price, it seems to me, must be some constraint somewhere, whether it is expulsion or something milder like suspension or probation or whatever else it might be. Now this doesn't mean that one necessarily needs to be vindictive with students, and here is still another complexity which I would like to suggest. During the course of this crisis, I discovered something that I'm sure a lot of other people did: namely, that the behavior of individuals was completely different from the behavior of groups. When I talked to individual students — and some of my students were very deeply involved in this — I might discover that we could not agree. In fact, our disagreements might be quite strong. But a kind of human relationship was reestablished that would be severed by manifestos signed by a number of faculty members or by students. In other words, I must confess that in this case I feel much more inclined towards leniency when I talk to individuals than I do when I see them as groups.

INTERVIEWER: How do you feel about the use of police on the University campus? Do you think it could have been avoided?

GAY: The second part of your question is of course pure conjecture. Let me offer you my conjecture. It seems to me that the use of the police in both instances was more or less unavoidable. But I would go on to say that the second time that the police were used [during the reoccupation of Hamilton Hall] at least adequate notice was given to the students in Hamilton as to what they were facing, when the police might be coming in and so on. It was of course perfectly clear during the first occupation (which lasted, you remember, nearly a week) that the police would come in at one point or another. Still, I think it would have been preferable if the Administration had in some way informed the faculty about what it really planned to do. My own sense of the matter from the beginning was that it would have been very valuable if the Administration, busy as it was — and they were in fact intensely busy and working — had been more visible. And they could have been more visible if they had called some long faculty meetings towards the end of the week and had notified us and discussed with us the inevitable calling-in of the police if the buildings were not cleared. I think this would have permitted the faculty to continue to negotiate if they wanted to, perhaps desperately to the last moment, but would also have given a sense of — if not public approval at least public knowledge of what was going to happen. That would be my first point.

My second point would be that the best evidence we have suggests that the best judgment here would have to be a complicated one. For example, both the first liberation of Hamilton Hall (and I use "liberation" in its ordinary sense) and the second took place with a complete absence of violence. This shows that it can be done. But one would have to add that after Hamilton was cleared each time, other things were done that seemed, to put it mildly, quite unnecessary.

The police obviously did not behave themselves very well, plain-

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clothesmen in particular. And I know of course (and this is why the thing, like everything else about this, was so complicated), I know of course that the so-called "unspeakable" violence was certainly not unspeakable. I talked to a number of the kids, even those who had been hit themselves, who after a few days would say, "Well, considering what used to be true and still is true of student riots in France, or was true of American riots in the thirties, like the closed shop riots in Detroit in 1937, this was relatively . . ." — "mild" is perhaps an offensive word, but I think it was not unspeakable or not so horrendous as is imaginable. After all, the hospital records suggest that there were very few serious injuries; and one would also have to add that there was a certain amount of student brutality, by which I do not mean merely taunting the cops but actually throwing things at them.

Still, it does seem to me that there is a difference between students who are enraged and policemen who are supposed to be trained. It was a bad melee, so that it's really very hard to judge precisely which action was brutal and which was justified; but there is excellent evidence that the cops were far harsher than they should have been.

INTERVIEWER: Have your feelings about the Columbia situation changed a great deal during the course of events?

GAY: Well, I think that on the whole my opinions have a certain continuity. I thought from the beginning that it would be wise if the faculty did not give away too much of its — I know this is a hateful word, but I will use it — of its paternal role. It seemed to me from the beginning (and it does now, after I've talked with a good many students) that by treating the students as negotiators or by as it were trying to act their age — that is to say, men of forty or fifty trying to act like boys of twenty — faculty members would be forfeiting not only possibilities of settlement but really the respect of the students as well. And so it's really been quite gratifying to me that a number of faculty members who have been quite critical of the students nevertheless have retained the students' respect as far as I can judge.

When I changed my mind above all — and I can recall these moments — has been over and over again when I talked to students. There is something really very — well, touching about this kind of private meeting in which someone half your age tries desperately to convince you that you should be on his side, that you are wrong, that you are as it were a tolerable human being and he's willing to tolerate you but that you are nevertheless quite wrong in your reading of his maturity or his political wisdom. And you know very well that this boy is in desperate trouble, that his career — in which you are involved, by reading his papers and perhaps writing letters of recommendation, etc. — that his career may be slowed up, interrupted, perhaps even ruined in some cases. All this makes me feel very sad, and it is at moments like these that I really think insistence on the letter of the law is too rigid an insistence.

Now you might say that at this point I am giving away something of my own paternal role, but I don't think so. I think that one has a kind of obligation to recognize, as we have recognized I think too little, first of all how young they all are and how old we are in comparison, and secondly, when you think of the world around us,

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how right so many of them are, even if they're wrong about the way in which they express their rightness. God knows, it's not a very enviable world in which they live, and I suppose we didn't make it very enviable for them.

So I don't think we can simply say, "Well, it's all Dr. Spock's doing." By psychologizing at all we take away the politically expressive meaning of what they've done, and if we take that kind of analysis and think that it exempts us from paying attention to them even as symptoms of something, then we'll be losing a great deal of the value of what's been going on. I am not excessively optimistic that this kind of activity is terribly helpful to a university. I do think, though, that it might be possible not to agree with the students or to accept what they have to say but at least to pay attention to the fact that they find this kind of activity necessary.

Eric Bentley

INTERVIEWER: Professor Bentley, what in your estimation is the nature of the conflict at Columbia? Do you regard it as essentially a conflict between students and Administration?

BENTLEY: I don't know where the conflict begins. I think it's all that it's been said to be: it's a conflict of generations for one thing. It's not *essentially* between students and Administration but of course it can easily come to a head as that. It can also be seen—and I would want to stress this aspect—as a political conflict, meaning not just that there's politics in it but that from a person's politics you can predict precisely his attitude to everything at Columbia. (I include myself in that generalization.) It's a struggle between left and right. It's a division between those who on the whole want the present system accepted (no doubt with certain reforms — this was always true of conservatives) and those who reject it totally and in that sense are radical and/or revolutionary.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that it would have been possible to avoid the kind of confrontation that's taken place, or do you think that the personalities involved precluded that possibility?

BENTLEY: That's a deep, philosophical question, really, involving whether what is determined is really determined and is totally determined. At the philosophical level I don't know how to answer it. On a more superficial level I tend to think the confrontation could have been avoided had the avoidance begun some years ago, but that, as of 1968, it had become unavoidable. I do think that the personalities of Kirk and Truman played a part, and that means I think that other

Eric Bentley, Brander Matthews Professor of Dramatic Literature at Columbia, participated in the deliberations of the original Ad Hoc Faculty Group under Alan Westin. After that group ceased to function, he was associated with the more radical Ad Hoc Faculty-Student Group which continued to meet in McMillin Theatre.

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persons cast in those roles might have played them differently. On the other side I tend to think the opposite: as regards Mark Rudd and the two or three other strike leaders I know personally, I intend nothing either favorable or unfavorable in saying that if it hadn't been them it would have been somebody else with similar characteristics.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say a revolution has occurred at Columbia?

BENTLEY: No, because I would reserve that word for a general overturn of an entire society, as in Cuba or Russia.

INTERVIEWER: Insofar as the university is a kind of society, would you say that there has been a revolution, or do you think that it has not succeeded? Do you think there's been a partial revolution?

BENTLEY: Well, I think there are three kinds of change in question here, and some confusion occurs because people don't distinguish between one and another. There is revolution—in which a change at the university would just be part of a change in the whole social order, as has happened, I assume, at the University of Havana in the last several years. Then at the other extreme there is what some of my colleagues call structural change, which *I* call bureaucratic change—Alan Westin's type of change and his Executive Committee's kind of change. (I'm not being objective, I realize, in my definitions. There's going to be a certain hostility in my tone; you must allow for that.) It's clear that I regard this kind of change as superficial and external and possibly even hypocritical: at any rate as *slight* change compared with the other. In between these two "extremes" there is what I have myself been interested in at this time (which is not to say that I wouldn't be interested in the revolutionary change also if I saw it in the cards) and that is the kind of change that runs a good deal deeper than what is contemplated by Westin and his colleagues, and yet which can occur without the total social revolution which is what Mark Rudd has in mind: I don't want to write his lines for him but I'd say he wants to have revolution in mind more constantly and to argue for its relevance more often and in more connections than I would. Which would constitute a practical difference between us at some points; but it's not as unfriendly a difference as the differences we both have with the third group.

INTERVIEWER: What do you see as the university's proper function with respect to its immediate environment—in this case an urban environment—and with respect to the society at large and the various departments of the federal government?

BENTLEY: I am saying to the SDS people: "I don't want to wait until our society has been changed, and I don't want to bother people too much with all those other changes, much as I might crave them. I'd rather concentrate on the university changes and 'forget' our differences in other areas. Get all the people that want those working on them." To this the SDS people will reply—and I won't detach myself from their reply or dismiss it as wrong or irrelevant—"Yes, but in many cases it's impossible to do that, as with the gymnasium, for instance." The gymnasium is *the* Columbia issue *par excellence*. It certainly makes SDS's point as well as anything could: that a university issue *is* a community issue. And here we come close to the

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essence of the recent crisis. Let's concede that there had been peaceful, verbal, "democratic" attempts to stop the building of the gymnasium on that site. That, it seems to me, you not only *can* concede but *must*—because it's provable. The second concession I'll propose is a value judgment, namely, that this move against the building of the gymnasium was *right*. However, there is now what you might call a consensus that it was right, meaning that only a minority disagree, apparently quite a small minority. So, if we have a wise move that's been taken, and we wanted that move taken, then we have to ask, "Was there any way it could have been taken at that point other than the so-called 'illegal' way" or whatever you'd call it? It certainly wasn't violence against persons: it was violence against a fence. A piece of a fence was broken: that was the only violence on the gym site, when it was "liberated." . . . If these concessions are made, then it seems to me impossible to turn around and say that Grayson Kirk's very personal, vindictive attempt to destroy Mark Rudd is right. Even short of that, if you don't agree that Kirk was vindictive, the attempt by Columbia University to punish the people to whom they owe something good is ludicrous. It's a contradiction that one may not accept in honor. And if that is conceded, many consequences follow: amnesty and a lot of other things . . . There are a lot of people who now want the reform of Columbia. Most of them didn't until a month ago. I never heard Alan Westin say he wanted Columbia restructured, and yet now he picks himself as the spokesman for this idea. What pushed him in this direction? Not the voice of God but the voice of Mark Rudd. That is very important and discredits every attempt that is made by the University to destroy Mark Rudd and the people like him; they're destroying the very men to whom they owe the greatest debt. So I think one has to go along with the student action, though my saying so has produced a lot of hate mail telling me I'm in favor of arson, slaughter and every kind of violence.

INTERVIEWER: I'd like to ask you something about the faculty. I'd like to ask you first what role you feel the faculty has played during the crisis, and then if you would to go on and talk about whether or not you feel they should have played a different role.

BENTLEY: Well, let me start by stating a presupposition of mine. I consider professors deeply conservative as a class, more so than many business people even, and less flexible. This is partly due to their excessive involvement in ideology. Some businessmen couldn't care less about ideology either way. Professors always care. One must not expect much from them in the way of social change. Getting down to cases, the Columbia faculty divided three ways, the three *political* ways: conservative, radical, and center. "Conservative" in this context meant seeing the issue as one of discipline. For the conservatives the question always was, "Shouldn't people like Kirk discipline people like Rudd?" And it was a rhetorical question. The answer could only be yes. "Radical," of course, meant the opposite: "Rudd must be right; Kirk must be wrong." And Center meant — as Center usually means in revolutionary situations — "We're all terribly nervous and hope there won't be violence." That was how I saw our faculty divide, and the division was definite enough and unchanging enough

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for one to see fairly early that there could be no such thing as faculty unity, let alone faculty action.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that it was ever really possible for the faculty to mediate in this dispute?

BENTLEY: At the time, I was a person who wanted them to mediate; therefore, at the time, my answer to your question must have been yes. And yet, now, *after* the experience, I think mediation must have been doomed from the start, and was therefore not a sound idea. I think one should have accepted the situation as a political one and openly joined in the political struggle from the start — in exactly the way that SDS recommended, yes. But I was originally with Westin and his Ad Hoc Group in thinking that we could mediate. This is what made collaboration possible between somebody like me and somebody like Daniel Bell: I found myself approving of many proposals he made. They were not doctrinaire: they were procedural. However, later I began to feel that there was a difference in ideology between us which came out precisely in his belief in pure procedure, in pure *non*-ideology, his idea that we should deal in patterns of negotiation, value-free. I began to realize that these patterns were themselves antagonistic to values I held and therefore from my viewpoint were not value-free at all. But if "the end of ideology" was a factor in the Columbia crisis — and it was — this was even more through Alan Westin than through Bell himself. If one man told Westin that two and two were four, and another man told him two and two were eight, Westin would hold it proven that two and two are six, and that the other two other views are equally wrong and equally ideological and together set up "polarization," which is the dirtiest word in his vocabulary. The anti-ideological approach was intended to cool the boiling antagonists Kirk and Rudd, only we didn't know in advance exactly what positions either one would take.

INTERVIEWER: But wasn't it clear from the beginning — or at least from very early in the crisis — that the demonstrators wanted amnesty, and that the Administration would never grant that?

BENTLEY: Well, Rudd and SDS were for amnesty for striking students, that was kind of a constant. Nevertheless it seemed possible at some moments that the Administration would grant the substance of amnesty if the word were dropped, and that SDS would agree to this. This was what Westin wanted, but it didn't happen because Kirk called the cops. He told the public he didn't do this until all possibilities of negotiation had been exhausted. But neither Westin nor I nor any informed man of good will can believe him. On the contrary, Kirk had been itching to call the cops from the very start. According to some accounts, he'd even *called* them the week before, but Mayor Lindsay had him countermand the order.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that SDS ever would have accepted a settlement of the dispute through mediation?

BENTLEY: I'd say that SDS were not adamant, as to mediation, though they *were* in a box through having only made minimum demands. (They should have made ten demands and backed down from four. Instead they made the naïve mistake of only asking for the six things they had to have.) As far as SDS is concerned, a little mediation

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might have been possible. The real obstacle was the Administration; which is perhaps in the nature of the case. The Columbia faculty has no power. According to the book of rules, it may only recommend. It is the privilege of the President to turn its recommendations down. So far as I can see, doing just that may be the only visceral pleasure in a Columbia President's by no means Dionysian existence . . . My student friends tell me Kirk isn't important because his successor will be just like him. I can't accept that. It's like saying DeGaulle was just like Pétain in 1940: the two belonged to the same class, etc. I think new leadership is essential because Kirk is committed to his erroneous ways and would regard any degree of self-correction as a concession to the enemy. A new man, however undistinguished, wouldn't labor under this particular handicap. . . .

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that the ramifications of what has happened at Columbia will be positive in the long run?

BENTLEY: I think they *can* be positive in the long run. Whether they *will* be isn't yet determined: it depends on what we all do — and on what we all don't do. I would think of it as of revolutionary situations generally. A whole community is bust wide open. That's dangerous, that's terrible. It's also wonderful, inspiring, challenging, loaded with opportunities. Everything depends on people's responses to it. In my view the most inadequate response is that of a sort of 1815 Restoration, forgiving nothing and forgetting everything. Sure, it's terrible to a Robespierre, but who wants to be a Metternich? For my part, yes, I *fear* some of our little Robespierres. As Noam Chomsky told them, "you'd rather Karl Marx had burned the British Museum down than worked on *Das Kapital* in it." I have never regarded the University as my enemy, at worst as one employer among others — and even at that I hoped to give value for money. If a few minutes ago I presented the academic class as a pretty sinister one (which it is) I should certainly add before finishing that it also — and not accidentally — contains Chomsky and Marcuse. And where would they be able to go if the academy turned them down or if they agreed with their more unruly pupils and turned the academy down? As Lenin said, left-wing communism is an infantile disorder.

INTERVIEWER: Some people seem to think that the implications of the events at Columbia are extremely troubling. Why do you think they might think so?

BENTLEY: Because they consider SDS and the sympathizing strikers (and people like Chomsky and Marcuse and me) to be enemies of law and order. But the law and order talk is in bad faith. Naturally, if I have everything and you have nothing, my ideology is going to have some pretty strong clauses in it about the wickedness of theft; but these clauses are in bad faith. I find the whole philosophy implied in the news releases of the Columbia Administration to be, in this sense, in thoroughly bad faith. As for their unphilosophical language, it's doubletalk. They are against violence, they say. It sounds like a concrete enough statement, and continues to seem so when a picture of a broken lamp in the President's office is submitted in evidence. But we all know that the important violence is violence against human beings — and much more of this was used by the

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Administration than by the students . . . OK, we are against the Administration's law and order — as they, I assume, would be against ours were we in power. As to "a tiny minority imposing its will upon," etc., again the facts have been distorted. J. Edgar Hoover used to say that any figures on the number of Communists around should be multiplied by a hundred. Doesn't Grayson Kirk respect Hoover anymore? SDS had only about 70 members, but membership means very little in those circles, and in any case it was proven that several thousand students rallied to the cause at Columbia. The Counter-Commencement, for which SDS got the credit in the Left as well as the Right press (they confirm each others' lies), was organized *in toto* by Students for a Restructured University, a group which is rather unfriendly to SDS — but is still fundamentally opposed to the Administration. (Several thousand people attended.) Would you repeat your question about ramifications again?

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that the ramifications of what has happened at Columbia will be positive in the long run?

BENTLEY: Yes, well, some of my colleagues are saying: what happened was terrible, but we will turn it to account, and create a positive outcome, in that NOTHING LIKE THAT MUST EVER BE ALLOWED TO HAPPEN AGAIN. I am trying to define a very different position. First, I think the outcome will be negative if we don't look sharp. Second, though I think it can be positive, I would not regard a return to what was as positive at all. A positive outcome means not only a better university but — in some degree at least — another *kind* of university.

Mark Rudd and Lewis Cole

INTERVIEWER: Do you regard the conflict at Columbia as essentially a conflict between students and Administration?

RUDD: I'd say it's a lot more complex. You start with the Administration as the basic antagonist, representing the status quo. On the other side you have a core of students, and mostly only students, who stand for progressive change—for historical progress. The mass of students joins in at one point or another, either earlier or later. The faculty—to show how complex the picture becomes—joins with the Administration by and large, so at that point you're not sure whether you're fighting the Administration or the faculty *and* the Administration.

COLE: Well, objectively what the faculty does might be more helpful

Mark Rudd, Chairman of the Columbia University chapter of Students for a Democratic Society, was until recently a junior in Columbia College.

Lewis Cole is one point shy of graduating from Columbia College because he flunked the swimming requirement. He is an active member of Columbia SDS.

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to the Administration than to us, but it seems to me that they aren't going to get anything out of this because they haven't made a real decision to act one way or another, either with us or with the Administration.

RUDD: You're probably right, and the faculty could remain as powerless as before. And yet, on another level, on the level of conscious decision, when you talk to the liberals—even the liberals out for amnesty—they will tell you that the primary goal at this point is to return the University to normal, to continue the educational function. And given this outlook, they adopt tactics and strategy which pretty much coincide with the Administration's—no matter what petitions they may sign.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel that it would have been possible at any specific point for the faculty to have played a different role?

RUDD: No. Well, look, certainly they could have played another role: when they were attempting to mediate, for instance, they could have sided with us on the question of amnesty instead of siding with the Administration. *That* they could have done. But to say "could—could not" really neglects the historical situation. After all, at this point the faculty's educational function is basically to transmit bourgeois ideology. Now I hope that's not regarded as too polemical or too ideological a statement, but you take even some of the sociology professors who are thought to be liberal. None of them are Marxists, none of them transcend the limits set down on social thought. And given their role as transmitters of ideology, it's no wonder that when a group of students challenges basic assumptions of order and political methods, they react pretty much along the same lines as the most conservative, although with some naïveté.

COLE: You see, a number of faculty members were saying, "Well, yes, we agree that this is right and that's right, and this demand is perfectly permissible and should be acceded to, etc." But they differed with us on tactics. We kept insisting that they make a political choice: that is, that they say, "Right now it's more important that these demands be met than that the University go back to normal." Their argument for not making that political choice was that they could not make a choice which would so seriously disrupt the functioning of the University. But what we were saying was that things had come to that pass where the University had to be disrupted to have the kind of politics that even some of these men said were correct. But they refused to do it; and because they didn't make that kind of free choice, now they really are going to be powerless.

RUDD: Besides their being bound to the situation, though, I think they believed that they were making a conscious political choice by saying "We understand that if the Administration grants amnesty then all hell will break loose on this campus through the right-wing reaction." I think they really believed in the right-wing reaction (which never materialized, incidentally), but that meant, first, that they were accepting the Administration's analysis completely, and secondly, that they were not understanding the ideological content of amnesty versus punishment.

INTERVIEWER: Let's talk about that for a minute. From the outset you've

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demanded amnesty as a precondition to negotiations. This particular demand has confused many people who are familiar with—and comfortable with—the kinds of protest employed by Gandhi, for instance, or by Martin Luther King, who always seemed willing to subject themselves to the punishments meted out by the same authorities that they were questioning.

RUDD: Now let's go very slowly.

INTERVIEWER: OK. First: do you consider the occupation of the University buildings an act of civil disobedience?

RUDD: No. It was not an act of civil disobedience; it was a straight political act to gain power—to gain *some* power.

INTERVIEWER: In view of the fact that amnesty is a fairly common and widely accepted procedure in various forms of negotiations—labor negotiations, for instance—why do you think there has been so much resistance to it in this case? Even on the part, and significantly on the part, of liberals?

COLE: For the same reason that there was a lot of resistance to it when labor was first demanding the right to organize: because granting amnesty would be recognizing the right of the students to have engaged in this form of protest and would recognize them as the kind of power on the campus which they haven't been recognized as before.

INTERVIEWER: That brings me to the next question. Much of the language we have heard during the past few weeks, and the existence of the student "strike" itself, seems to suggest that the Columbia situation is being conceived in terms of a labor-management model. Are you satisfied that this model is entirely applicable to the situation?

RUDD: It's not entirely applicable, for a number of reasons. It is, however, consistent with our view of the university as knowledge factory and as manpower factory. That is, students withholding their labor—in the sense of being students—will stop production in the factory.

COLE: The production of themselves.

RUDD: However, what we have here at Columbia now is not a strike. It's a symbolic strike, where a few of us remove ourselves from the production line. A strike would mean all students not registering at Columbia University.

COLE: Even more than that, to have a really serious social impact, it would have to be all students not registering throughout New York, or something like that. And because what you're producing (that is, the students) takes a very long time to produce, you would have to have a very long-range strike—at least a year and probably much longer—to achieve the same kind of social effect that you can achieve much faster in industries that produce material goods.

RUDD: That's one reason why this has only been a symbolic strike. Secondly, this is not like a labor-management strike where laborers walk off and *know* that they're stopping production. The question of self-consciousness as producers is important to a strike, and students here don't have that self-consciousness; so what they're really doing is removing themselves from this ideal situation called the "university community" in an attempt to gain more leverage within that community.

COLE: Remember that the idea of the strike was always stated in terms

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like "the University will not be able to function normally," not "the goods will not be produced." So in a sense the other meaning of the word—as in a *military* "strike"—comes closer to what we mean.

INTERVIEWER: What in your view is the proper relation of the university to the society at large?

COLE: Well, we've all heard the argument that the university is a value-free institution. Our position on that is that that's nonsense, that in terms of the way it operates in New York, for instance, the university operates as a racist institution, and in terms of the way it operates for the society at large, it helps racist imperialism. Our demands were related to these different policies and functions. But one of the questions that has been raised against us is this: If the university is so interconnected with American society, how could you possibly change its nature unless you changed the nature of the society itself? The answer is that you cannot; but I think perhaps you can have such a thing as a neutral university—that is, a university which, though it doesn't help liberation movements throughout the world, at least does not help counter-insurgency movements.

RUDD: I don't think that's possible, really. Even if you did away with things like IDA and support for governmental policy, you would still have to look further into the question of funding in the university. Look at Columbia. Columbia makes its money off real estate. That isn't government money, that's private capital, but it raises the question of Columbia's racism, for instance. I think it's almost inevitable, given the fact that Columbia owns much of New York, that it's got to maintain substandard housing. It has to maintain ghettos; it has to keep expanding in the way it expands, which is the most economical way. I can't see any means of funding in this country without either real estate or capital investment in corporations, and that raises other problems which we haven't even dealt with here—for example, a university's investment policies in South Africa, or its American imperialist investments.

COLE: Then it becomes a question of how divided the university is in itself between the kinds of things you were just talking about and the mass production of students. I remember when we were thinking about what else students could do besides going on strike that would make the University give in, we couldn't think of anything: and what that seemed to my mind to represent was that the university maybe really *was* divided, that what it gets its money from, the research that it does, etc., has actually nothing to do with the production of students, that even if the students weren't produced the university could continue. We haven't stopped the computer center from working, for instance. We haven't stopped any of the labs that IDA uses or any of that—so how much have we actually affected the University by having an eighty percent effective strike?

RUDD: When we started this, we were talking about changing a few small things: the gym, IDA, etc. But then people began to talk about student power and a free University and everything else, and it got completely away from us. Our original goals took those things into consideration, but they also had the purpose of raising consciousness concerning the structure of American capitalism. That, really, is the

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primary goal of radicals engaging in this kind of issue-oriented struggle. Any particular issue we raise probably can't change things all that much and even our getting power in the University can't change things all that much, but changing people's understanding of society, getting them to understand the forces at work to create the university the way it is, the forces at work to create the war in Vietnam, to create racism: this is *the* primary goal of radicals. And the harvest of this planting will not be seen this year when we gain a modicum of student power, not in ten years when students have all the bipartite committees they want, but sometime in the future when this understanding of capitalist society bears fruit in much higher level struggle. In revolution. And so what we're engaged in, to use a piece of SDS rhetoric, is the process of radicalization; we make no bones about this.

COLE: I think that may be true for us, but I don't think it's true for the five thousand who were out on campus fighting the cops. What happened at Columbia pointed up something that's been going on for the last three years, and that is that the whole student movement has, in some way and for some reason I don't really understand, become a social movement. Throughout this whole year it seemed inevitable that sooner or later one university was going to have some kind of explosion because it was as though there was an underground fire going on all year, what with the Dow demonstrations, etc. But that it should have happened at Columbia, that it should have taken the form it did—I still don't know exactly why.

RUDD: I think one of the things that led to this was a very active left for four years, probably the most active in the country, which kept talking about the same issues—the war in Vietnam, lately imperialism and racism—and which accustomed people to radical tactics. Even though people perhaps didn't accept those tactics, they became more and more accustomed to the idea of people taking strong principled action. Perhaps the most important thing the left did was to break through what most SDS kids recognize as apathy: there is no such thing as apathy at Columbia anymore.

And this four-year educational campaign bore fruit during a crisis period when a lot of things were going on: the war in Vietnam, the draft (which hit about three months ago), the assassination of Martin Luther King—perhaps *the* most important critical event—and McCarthy. My analysis of the McCarthy student movement is that students were caught in a bind between the possibility of becoming radicals and engaging in direct action, and the possibility of being co-opted back into the electoral system. The first day the McCarthy Committee set up on campus, 650 people signed up. Now in part I think this was because they were afraid of SDS; but at the same time they understood what we were saying, and the truth in it. And the moment we began to *act*—to act directly against racism and imperialism—the McCarthy buttons disappeared.

INTERVIEWER: Your plan to have a "Liberation School" over the summer seems to suggest that much of what you want cannot be contained within the University. Is that so?

RUDD: We've said as much.

INTERVIEWER: In that case, I'd like to ask what your reaction is to this

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exchange between Nat Hentoff and Herbert Marcuse at the Theatre for Ideas. "Hentoff: 'We've been talking about new institutions, new structures, as the only way to get fundamental change. What would that mean to you, Mr. Marcuse, in terms of the university, in terms of Columbia?' Marcuse: 'I was afraid of that, because I now finally reveal myself as a fink. I have never suggested or advocated or supported destroying the established universities and building new anti-institutions instead. I have always said that no matter how radical the demands of the students, and no matter how justified, they should be pressed within the existing universities and attained within the existing universities. I believe—and this is where the finkdom comes in—that American universities, at least quite a few of them, today are still enclaves of relatively critical thought and relatively free thought. So we do not have to think of replacing them by new institutions. But this is one of the very rare cases in which I think you can achieve what you want to achieve within the existing institutions.' "

RUDD: For a man who deals in analyzing a society where criticism is a non-entity and where there are strict limits and controls on thought, Professor Marcuse seems to have a blind spot when it comes to the controls and limits on thought in the university, which are tremendous. If anything, our student movement opens up alternatives, because it reveals to people the existence of ideology within the university, which Professor Marcuse seems to ignore when he says that the University is the center of "relatively" open, free, critical thought. The "relatively" part sounds like "a temporary partial bombing halt."

COLE: And say it is a center for relatively critical thought: the university is also a center for counter-insurgency research, for implementing imperialist policies throughout the world. And these two functions exist hand in hand, so that it finally becomes a question of whether you're going to let the critical thought factory and the murder factory be in the same building.

RUDD: Lew makes the assumption that the two functions can and do exist simultaneously within the university, critical thought and war production. The alternative assumption is, I think, more true: that is, that the university exists in order to produce manpower for use here in the United States. In order to have the proper manpower, it has to train people in the proper ideas; and the proper ideas are basically bourgeois ideology.

COLE: There are individual classes where that might not be so, and everybody always got very hung up on this when we'd be talking to the college faculty and they'd say, "Well, that isn't so in *my* class, certainly!" But a university is an *institution,* it operates as an institution, and the question is what that institution is doing as a whole. This critical thought that Marcuse talks about—he's talking about it in a complete vacuum. What's the purpose of having critical thought if it's going to be used by a society for co-opting?

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Ray Brown and Bill Sales

INTERVIEWER: What do you regard as the most important issue in the Columbia conflict: that is, what issue do you think best defines the kind of conflict it is?

SALES: I think Columbia University's building of a Jim Crow gymnasium on public park land in Harlem is representative of the most significant issue at stake here: that is, the relationship of an urban university to the community surrounding it. Columbia University in collusion with the city administration acquired public park land from the community without the community's say, to build a private, a segregated facility, to only 15 per cent of which the community was to have access (as defined by the University). The method of acquiring land here is significant, as is the fact that Columbia got it for very little (2.1 acres for $3,000 a year, a 400-year lease renewable every five years after the first hundred years.) Moreover, Columbia will, over the next decade or so, employ this same method—or similar methods—to acquire land in the surrounding community in order to expand the University's living accommodations: in other words, to turn West Harlem into a white enclave. In this way, Columbia will be decreasing the supply of ghetto housing while the number of people who need that housing increases; and this can only perpetuate the dilapidated conditions and the social pathology that you find in the ghetto.

BROWN: The black students are specifically opposed to Columbia University's use of its position of political strength to take advantage of the powerlessness of the black community. It's our position that insofar as we are able we will either stop that kind of usurpation of power or focus attention in it by dramatizing it in the manner we did.

INTERVIEWER: At this point, to what extent are the aims of the black students involved with those of the Strike Committee?

BROWN: We have four demands: (1) that construction of the gymnasium be terminated and the slate wiped clean; (2) that the University use its good offices to see that charges are dropped against all persons arrested in previous demonstrations at the gym site;[2] (3) that faculty and administrative ties with the Institute for Defense Analyses be severed; (4) that amnesty be granted to those involved in the demonstration.

Ray Brown and Bill Sales represent The Black Students of Hamilton Hall, a group composed of black students from various divisions of the University (Columbia College, School of General Studies, School of Social Work, etc.) which occupied Hamilton Hall from April 23 to April 29. Mr. Brown is a senior majoring in history in Columbia College, Mr. Sales a graduate student in Public Law and Government.

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2 Prior to the occupation of Hamilton Hall which began on April 23, there were several demonstrations at the gymnasium site in which numerous community persons and Columbia students were arrested on charges ranging from criminal trespass to felonious assault.

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I would say that our position on other issues, specifically the issues of student power, is simply this: our immediate concern is not with the restructuring of Columbia University. It's our position that Columbia has to change its basic policies and attitudes, and that merely reshuffling individuals or altering the administrative structure of the University will not necessarily result in that kind of basic change. It's been our experience that members of the University other than the administrative staff—that is, faculty and students—can often be just as racist as the Administration. And so it's a question of basic change in attitude and policy, and we are not concerned with what specific kinds of restructuring in the University may bring about that kind of change. We're interested in results.

INTERVIEWER: Would you explain your position on amnesty?

BROWN: Our position on amnesty is a moral one. We believe that the University must grant amnesty because by virtue of its racist policy toward the community the University is responsible for the situation that developed on this campus. That is, the University bears the onus for what happened and must acknowledge this fact and acknowledge its willingness to change by accepting the responsibility itself and not demanding that any persons who were involved in the demonstration bear the responsibility. We are not responsible for what happened. We are not morally culpable: the University is. And for that reason we cannot acknowledge the University's right to take any punitive sanctions against us.

INTERVIEWER: Why were the white students asked to leave Hamilton?

SALES: White students were asked to leave Hamilton Hall because black students wanted to hold at least one building to focus the protest on community-wide issues: in other words, to forge an identification between what black students were doing in Hamilton Hall and what the community was doing in Harlem in relation to Columbia University's racism. Many of the white students were not prepared to dramatize the issue through a confrontation with students and faculty. Their basic position was that students, faculty and administration had to be made aware of the racism which exists in this country, but that in order for this to happen a dialogue had to be maintained. They thought that confrontation would inhibit if not destroy this dialogue and initially they were against it.

They were therefore asked to leave and told that if they really wanted to be relevant to what black people in the community were doing they would go and take as many other buildings as they could hold. They subsequently did decide to take other buildings and to move their whole program from the level of communication and politicization to that of confrontation as a technique for making white people aware of their analysis of what the system was all about.

BROWN: In addition to those ideological and strategic differences there is the simple tactical point that the white students were not prepared to barricade the building as of the time that the decision was made by the black students that that would be the best way of continuing the demonstration. At that point it was impossible for the white stu-

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dents to remain, given the fact that they were vacillating and voting over and over again and unable to make a clear decision on their role. If they had remained it would probably have diluted the effectiveness of the protest.

INTERVIEWER: So it would seem that the occupation of Hamilton was the crucial, the really strategic move in the situation.

BROWN: I think that's quite true, and I think that the press has pretty effectively distorted that in collusion with the Administration, which has obviously wanted to play down the racial angle — which is one they can't deal with so effectively as they can deal with other issues. I think it's quite clear that the position of Hamilton Hall was crucial for a number of reasons. The most important reason was that the Adminisration couldn't effectively move on the white students without moving on the black but it was very reluctant to move on the black students; the Administration was reluctant to use the police for seven days because it felt that if it moved on Hamilton it might very well face the wrath of the Harlem community. And in fact there was some rather substantial Harlem support in the form of food and other necessities brought up from the community. There were also many black persons from Harlem present throughout the seven days at one time or another during rallies and demonstrations in support.

I think, too, that there was much legitimacy added to the whole demonstration by the fact that there was better discipline in Hamilton Hall, both externally and internally, than there was in other buildings. There was less revolutionary rhetoric, and this made it more difficult for the press to redbait. It was clearly realized by those in Hamilton that what was going on was a demonstration, not "the revolution."

SALES: And because of superior discipline it was much easier for the students in Hamilton to wage a war of attrition against the Administration than it was, as I understand it, in other buildings, where there were too many people present, and where the continuous political discussion didn't really allow anyone to relax.

BROWN: In other buildings there was also a lack of effective control of access to the building, and that was a problem. The students in Hamilton Hall also conducted daily drills on how to deal with tear gas and MACE, and things like this add, I think, to people's confidence, and consequently minimize the chances of panic.

INTERVIEWER: In your view is the role of black students at a university different from that of white students?

BROWN: I would say that black students at this university have demonstrated that they view themselves essentially as an extension of the black community and that their primary identity is with the black community and not with the university community. And in that sense there are certain obvious differences in their role, certain obvious things that differentiate them from white students, who will generally I suppose view themselves primarily as members of an academic community. I think this is indicated by the fact that in effect all the demands made by the black students were community demands and not student power demands.

INTERVIEWER: How would you characterize the relation of your group

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to black leaders like Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael?

SALES: Well, we were greatly heartened by the support that we received from Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael so far as publicizing the real issues involved was concerned. That is, they were able to use their press appeal to get our press statements into the press when we ourselves could not get through the blackout. They came to us and said, "What can we do for you?" They didn't dictate: they were being of service to us, not to themselves — being selfless. I think that was very important to us.

What was also significant was the support we got from many politicians in Harlem and many black civil servants. In general, community support cut across class and ideological lines. We received food from community organizations such as the West Harlem Community Organization as well as Harlem CORE. Now there's probably a great deal of ideological difference between West Harlem and Harlem CORE. But there was a consensus among all concerned — mainstream Democratic politicians, Republican bureaucrats and civil servants, militant activists and just regular community workers — that these student demands were valid and must be supported.

INTERVIEWER: Do you now feel that you have the Administration's assurance that the gym will not be built as originally planned?

BROWN: Our first demand has not been met.

INTERVIEWER: If the Administration had given the black students occupying Hamilton Hall explicit assurance that the gym construction would be terminated, would they have come out regardless of what groups in other buildings decided to do?

SALES: We have four demands. We had a precondition before we would even consider the question of negotiations — not the question of leaving but the question of negotiations — and that precondition was that construction of the gym be stopped and the slate be wiped clean and that general amnesty be granted to all the demonstrators. Our precondition was not met, our four demands were not met, and we were therefore arrested. Our position is still the same.

INTERVIEWER: What changes, internal and external, would you like to see Columbia make in its relation to the black community?

SALES: If the question of the University's relationship to the Harlem community is a question of basic attitude, then once those Trustees and members of the Administration responsible for the University's policies in this area have a change of heart and attitude, structural changes and innovations will follow. I am not an expert in university administration, or in university expansion. Black students like us did not plan the University's expansion into Harlem. The very same people who got the University into this fix can get it out again, once they see the University in a different relationship to Harlem, a non-exploitive relationship.

BROWN: But it's clear that until such time as the University does recognize those explicit demands that we have made, its motives for maintaining that it wants to deal with the community in a sincere way are certainly open to question. After all, if it's not willing to stop and

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rectify the unjust policies that it's had in the past, then it's hard to believe its motives in the present are significantly different.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that the effect of the events of the past few weeks at Columbia will be beneficial in the long run?

SALES: Let me put it this way: I think that it was a disgrace that a crisis of this nature had to be precipitated in order to bring to light the relationship of Columbia University to the Harlem community, but it does seem to me that at this point both the Columbia Administration and the City Administration still have a chance to change their policies. But if they do not take advantage of the little time remaining to develop a new and different relationship to Harlem, then things are going to get a lot worse and if that happens then our protest will have been, in the final analysis, meaningless.

BROWN: I think it's quite clear that despite the press attempts to distort the nature and the designs of the Administration that we were effective — at least temporarily — in exposing and dramatizing the University's failure to recognize those persons who used the normal means of dissent to protest the University's policies. I think that that exposure will undoubtedly have consequences. At this point, I think the University is in a position to determine what those consequences will be: if it responds effectively there may be mutual benefit growing out of what happened from April 23 to 29. If the University doesn't respond effectively, I'm not really qualified to predict what will happen but I suspect that there will be increasing tension and that it will come to seem that solving problems of this kind through the normal means of discussion and protest is no longer a possibility.

SALES: One very sad aspect of the whole situation, and one which in the long run may bring about the most undesirable consequences, is the series of gross distortions which has appeared in the press. Not only the local press but the national press has in effect defined the problem here as related to student power issues: that is, as a problem involving young student rebels, alienated from their parents and from society in general, striking out in random fashion against authority. If this is the way the press will define the Columbia protest for the national community, then the basic issue of the university's relationship to the community will never be dealt with and will someday explode unexpectedly in a nationwide fashion.

BROWN: I think we have pointed out the fact that black students at Hamilton Hall were pivotal in terms of the entire demonstration. It wouldn't have lasted as long as it did, it wouldn't have been as effective as it has been if it had not been for the presence and the activities of the black students. And it's quite apparent that both the fourth estate and what might be called the fifth estate — the left-wing press — have effectively distorted the whole nature of the demonstration from beginning to end. If this kind of distortion continues then the only thing that's likely is a continued escalation of the conflict because in effect the main participants are being ignored.

SALES: One of the legitimate avenues of protest is, of course, the press and publicity. In many ways, it's the last avenue of protest before more drastic action. And if the press can no longer serve this essential

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function — the muckraking function — then the country is in for a hard time and we're all in very deep difficulty.

Charles Parsons

INTERVIEWER: Are you satisfied that all the parties to the Columbia dispute have acted in good faith throughout?

PARSONS: No. It's not so easy to say in a conflict as bitter as this one has sometimes been what acting in good faith is, but my impression of the fundamental strategy of the radical student leaders is that in a sense they're operating from outside the community; and therefore it's hard to say what good faith can mean to them, because they very often seem more interested in exposing the University than in reforming it. Although I have observed them really only from a distance, my general impression of the Strike Committee leadership has been that they have not been very much interested in a negotiated settlement, and that they've engaged in a certain amount of manipulation of their followers in order to hold them to a position of intransigence. At any rate, this I think has been the majority tendency of the Strike Coordinating Committee, though for a while after the initial bust when the Committee was made up on the basis of one representative per seventy students there was a moderate caucus which did exercise a moderating influence, at least on tactical decisions. But as you know many of the members of the moderate caucus later left the Strike Committee and went on to form the Students for a Restructured University.

I don't think that the tendency I've been describing holds true for the black students of Hamilton Hall, who, although they have been very distrustful and intransigent in some of their positions, have acted much more with the idea of getting certain very concrete concessions from the University and also, I think, with much more prudence.

But I've talked so much about the student leaders on this good faith question; I ought to talk about the other parties. The Administration has certainly engaged in a lot of maneuvering—I'm inclined to say obfuscation—in relation to a number of issues, in particular the issue of what they could or could not do because of various legal constraints. On the question of dropping criminal trespass charges, the Administration has not, I think, been candid with either the faculty or the students. As a result, it was only when it was too late that it became reasonably clear that the most immediate obstacle to the dropping of the trespass charges was the Trustees, and there's no evidence that the high Administration has done anything serious to pres-

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sure the Trustees on this point. On the other hand, they haven't come out and said flatly that they agree with the Trustees that the charges should not be dropped: if they had done that I think they would have got into a rather unpleasant situation with the faculty. But although the faculty did, at a very late stage, reiterate its view on the matter (through a Columbia College Faculty Resolution), it did so with the feeling that this was only a gesture. In effect, then, the obfuscation by the Administration on this point was a successful maneuver to prevent what might otherwise have been a confrontation between the faculty and the Trustees on the question.

There's a long history of administrative secrecy at Columbia which causes it to be distrusted even when it's being reasonable, but on matters other than this criminal charges one, I'm hesitant to say what the extent of the Administration's bad faith has been.

INTERVIEWER: What function do you think was served by the original Ad Hoc Faculty Group?

PARSONS: Well, there are two ways of taking that question. First, "What was it trying to do?" And second, "What was the effect of what it did?" I think what it was trying to do essentially was to stave off a resolution of the sit-ins by force, and to work for a reasonable negotiated settlement. I think the efforts made by the Group in this regard were intelligent and involved a very impressive — even heroic — outpouring of energy. The form which this effort took was twofold. It involved mediation, first of all; and it also involved more direct action about the twin questions of policing the campus and how to act when and if police were actually called. The Group was started by the people who signed the founding document of [Thursday] April 25, which contained the provision that "until this crisis is settled, we will stand before the occupied buildings to prevent forcible entry by police or others." People signed that document on Thursday afternoon, and that evening and night members of the Group acted in a rather courageous and forceful way in the spirit of that statement, first by staving off a threatened rush on Fayerweather by counter-demonstrators, and second, by their intervention at Low Library after Truman had come in and announced that police were being called. (After that, of course, the Group took over the patrolling function on a twenty-four hour basis.)

It's not clear that the consequences of this intervention were in the end good. It was an action which I fully sympathized with at the time, and which I would still defend as an action taken according to the best lights that were available at the time. However, there is a retrospective shadow cast on it by the failure of the mediation effort that was undertaken afterward. It seems to me that if it was inevitable that a large-scale police raid of the sort which did take place [on April 30] was going to take place, then the radicalization of the students, the effect of the communal atmosphere inside the buildings, was certainly intensified by the delay. Furthermore, my understanding of the situation is that because the police were called off the first time [April 25] it was more difficult to control their actions the second time [April 30], (although I think that on April 30 the Administration did not do everything it could have to control them). Conse-

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quently, although I think the Group's action was a noble one, it might have had a certain exacerbating effect.

In the end, of course, with some misgivings and some reservations many members of the Group (including myself) stood in front of the buildings when the police came. (There was never an official decision of the Group to do that, though I think most of us felt that the resolution passed on Sunday — the final mediation proposal — did commit us at least as individuals.) Our standing there on April 30 was essentially a demonstration. It was costly for some people: some people got hurt. I think most of us who were involved would defend it now as a necessary demonstration which bore witness to our personal concern for the students, our shame at the bankruptcy of University policies which was shown by this resort to force, and the feeling of most of us that not everything had been done that could have been done by the Administration to resolve the conflict by methods short of force.

INTERVIEWER: In view of the personalities and issues involved in the Columbia dispute, and in light of all that has taken place during the past few weeks, do you now feel that mediation by the faculty was ever a real possibility? Did the faculty ever have the power to settle the dispute?

PARSONS: Well, certainly one of the difficulties was the limitations of their power, but I don't think that this could have been assessed accurately before an attempt had been made to resolve the conflict. I think this was a problem which the people involved were conscious of from the start, but they weren't going to accept at the beginning the counsel of despair that they would not be able to move the Administration and the Trustees enough. They did, I think, move the Administration and the Trustees some: I think most people on the steering committee of the Ad Hoc Faculty Group felt that the President's statement of April 29, which was a response to our arbitration proposal [the Ad Hoc Faculty Group resolution] of April 28, did represent a significant conciliatory move, although it was felt that this wasn't enough.

INTERVIEWER: Do you now think that it would have been possible at any particular point for the faculty to resolve the conflict one way or another by aligning itself decisively with one side or the other?

PARSONS: Suppose, for example, that the Joint Faculties had passed a resolution which said "We endorse the six demands" while the students were still in the buildings? Would that have resolved the crisis? It certainly would have shifted it to another dimension. Whether it would have got the students out of the buildings is not certain, but I should think it would have been pretty hopeful: that is, it's hard to see what more the faculty could possibly have done. Such a move might have set up a kind of head-on conflict between the whole faculty and the Administration and Trustees. I ought to say, incidentally, that this is very much a *what-might-have-been* question, because I don't think there's a Chinaman's chance in hell that the Joint Faculties would have passed a resolution like that.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that the conditions under which the dem-

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onstrators would have been willing to leave the occupied buildings varied from building to building?[3]

PARSONS: Yes, and my impression of the thinking of the steering committee of the Ad Hoc Faculty Group was that after a certain point—exactly what point, I'm not sure—they felt that it would not be possible, given the attitudes of both sides, to arrive at a general agreement that would get everyone out of the buildings peacefully.

INTERVIEWER: In your opinion would it have been possible to get at least some of the students out?

PARSONS: Yes. And I think that's what the Ad Hoc Faculty Group was trying to do in the last couple of days. I believe that Westin said to the Cox Commission that he thinks that a degree of patience and conciliatory spirit on the part of the Administration—which was quite within the realm of possibility—could very well have accomplished this objective of getting most of them out peacefully. I'm not sure whether or not this is true, but I think it's a good enough bet so that one can be very critical of the Administration for not having been willing to make it.

INTERVIEWER: What is your position on the amnesty issue?

PARSONS: I think the student leaders' insistence on amnesty is one of the main factors which has made this thing so unresolvable, and they very often put it in a form that makes it appear at least that what they're really asking for is an abdication of authority on the part of the Administration, which one just can't realistically expect. I don't think amnesty would have been unreasonable as part of a more or less final settlement, but I think that the majority tendency even in the Ad Hoc Faculty Group—which after all was a liberal body, maybe considerably more liberal than the faculty as a whole—was always against amnesty, although they were willing to accept what would in effect have been token punishment. It might be that things would have worked out better if the faculty had given more play to the idea that amnesty might be acceptable as part of a settlement. But I think the students bear a lot of responsibility for the fact that the faculty wasn't prepared to do this (although obviously the faculty is responsible for its own attitudes) as a consequence of their insisting on amnesty in such an absolute way, and even as a precondition for any real negotiations.

INTERVIEWER: As you know, the Joint Committee on Disciplinary Affairs declared that its recommendations regarding student discipline were predicated on the assumption that the Administration would drop criminal trespass charges against the student demonstrators. Do

3 The five buildings in question were occupied by various groups: Hamilton Hall by black students; Fayerweather for the most part by graduate students, many of them in history; Avery for the most part by students in the School of Architecture. Low Library and Mathematics, which were occupied mainly by undergraduates, were generally considered the two most radical buildings: probably because the core of the groups in these buildings was thought to consist largely of so-called "hard-line" members of SDS. Throughout the occupation all the buildings—except for Hamilton Hall—were presumably represented by the Central Strike Committee.

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you think that the Administration's decision to begin disciplinary action before criminal trespass charges were dropped indicates some disregard for the recommendations of the Joint Committee?

PARSONS: It did indicate disregard for what I understood to be the spirit of their original report, but before proceedings were actually instituted the Committee made a sort of amendment in their statement of May 13, which seems pretty clearly to have laid the way open for the Administration's action. I think that this is something which has proved to have bad consequences, because it was after all the institution of disciplinary action that led to the second Hamilton sit-in. But I think it has to be said that after the battle of May 9th about the President's response to the original report, the Administration seems always to have proceeded within the letter of the Joint Disciplinary Committee's proposals, and the things that seem to be violations of the spirit of those proposals are things that the Joint Disciplinary Committee itself has either laid the way open for, or—as in the case of the summary suspensions of students arrested during the re-occupation of Hamilton—acquiesced in.

INTERVIEWER: Many faculty members seem to support the so-called "substantive" demands made by the student demonstrators. Some have even come out in favor of amnesty. Do you think that at this point it is sufficient—that is, effective—for faculty members who take such a position to announce their support of these demands through petitions, etc., or do you think that some further action may be required?

PARSONS: Yes, I think that further action probably is required. Let me say first that I don't consider myself a supporter of amnesty under present conditions, and at this point I'd be inclined to say to someone who does that the University's disciplinary action has now gone too far and amnesty is no longer a possibility. So far as the other issues are concerned, however: the IDA issue has awaited the report of the Henkin committee and I think that seems to be about ready, and it might favor disaffiliation. If it does, then there's a very obvious thing to do, namely stand on the committee report in the faculty and pass a resolution in the faculty, which is a much more powerful thing than a petition. My guess is that that would be enough to do it—that the Administration and the Trustees don't stand that strongly on IDA participation anyway. I could be wrong, and the committee report might also be unfavorable. In that event I'm not very sure what ought to be done; I'd have to think about that.

I think that the gymnasium issue is a very serious one because people whose judgment I respect think that if the gym is built in its present form, it could cause some real violence between the University and the people in Harlem. And if that judgment is correct then the building of the gym according to plan is something that we have a very strong interest in preventing. I think we should begin with the more traditional forms of action, faculty resolutions and so forth. If it still seems that the Trustees are resolved to go ahead (the indications of their attitude are very uncertain), I think perhaps a certain amount of representation to the city and the state on the question would be a suitable means of action. If that failed, I think some sort

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of boycott or strike by both students and faculty might be in order.

INTERVIEWER: What is the role of the current Independent Faculty Group with which you are associated?

PARSONS: Let me say first of all that at this point I think we should all be devoting a lot of attention to general proposals for reform of the University—that's of course the primary mission of the Executive Committee, and I think both individual faculties and independent groups on the faculty should be concerned with that. The Independent Faculty Group itself, however, has so far been concerned much more with more immediate issues. In its original conception it was to be a left center pressure group, and I think that there will probably be a continuing role for such a group. I don't at this point think that we're terribly strong. It seems that both the Administration and a lot of conservative faculty members take a very dim view of us. The students are not impressed with our power, and find (I think rightly) that our sympathy with them is less than complete—although I think they probably tend to underestimate the extent of our sympathy. We're likely to continue to take positions about the more immediate issues and also to engage in private discussions with some of the parties to this dispute—as we already have for instance with members of the Joint Disciplinary Committee, with members of the Executive Committee, with students, and to a lesser extent with members of the Administration (we're not on close enough terms with them). Our attempt in these discussions is to persuade the various parties to move in directions which we feel will lead to a resolution of the conflict.

Lionel Trilling

INTERVIEWER: What do you regard as the most important issue raised during the course of the conflict at Columbia?

TRILLING: It has more and more come to seem to me that the explicit issues were largely factitious. The gymnasium issue lost its force and was virtually forgotten as soon as the Trustees made their concessions. The IDA issue, when examined, was more symbolic than substantive. The demand for the resignation of the President and the Vice-President was obviously not serious—it was a talking point, a gesture of intransigence and was soon dropped. The actual issue, I believe, was —is—a very large and general one, best to be described as a cultural issue. The most radical students were expressing their doctrinaire alienation from and disgust with the whole of American culture. The less radical but still militant students were attempting to reach a new

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definition of what a young person is in relation to the institutions he is involved with. It is often remarked that maturation in our society comes much earlier than it used to even a few years ago, not intellectual maturation but cultural maturation. This circumstance is of crucial importance. Our colleges and universities were designed for students who were in certain respects considerably less developed than students now are, and one way of coming to an understanding of the students' dissatisfaction with the university is to perceive that they are pressing for the recognition of their maturity, for the right to participate in decisions about their lives in a way that is consonant with their sense of their development.

In my many interviews with students, and even when I was baffled by or unsympathetic with their particular demands, this was what unfailingly reached me.

Perhaps as an element of this new early maturation, there has developed among young people an appetite for gratuitous political activity. In speaking of their political activity as gratuitous, I don't mean to say that it has no relation to actuality, but quite apart from all actual and practical ends in view, there is, I think, the desire to be politically involved, in some extreme and exciting way. My sense of the gratuitousness of the kind of political activity that attracts the students arises from comparison with the kind of political acivity I observed and was in some degree involved with back in the thirties, in which specific aims and fully formulated views of society were of the essence. No doubt there was a certain element of gratuitousness even in that Marxist politics: quite apart from the particular ends in view, we wanted the gratifications of *being political.* But now, it seems to me, the gratuitous element is considerably greater than it was in the thirties. For young people now, being political serves much the same purpose as being literary has long done—it expresses and validates the personality. In saying this, I don't mean to question the authenticity of their emotions and motives, but I do mean to suggest that many—not all—of the issues they raised were adventitious or symbolic.

INTERVIEWER: This is a rather difficult question. What do you take to be the traditional role of the university in society? And in conjunction with that I'd like to ask: do you think that the validity of that role has been seriously challenged by the events at Columbia during the past few weeks?

TRILLING: It is indeed a difficult question. I'd like to come at it first in a pragmatic, social way. No university ever says so, but one traditional role of the university has been to serve as an instrument of social mobility. This was quite clear in medieval times when the universities were clerical and a man of low degree might rise in the Church, and it began to be clear again in the nineteenth century. Burckhardt noted the ever-increasing popular demand for education and explained it as a demand for improved status. This is now understood everywhere, and in the United States it is perfectly explicit. There can be no doubt that the status-bestowing function of the university, now quite overt, the part it plays in the creation of elites, has led to its being regarded with suspicion by many students.

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If we speak of status in connection with the university, we probably ought to take note of the recent sharp rise of the status of the university itself and then go on to observe that one function of the university is to raise the status of its own personnel. This has, I think, some bearing upon the students' attitude to the faculty.

The other traditional roles of the University, those that are announced by the universities themselves on their occasions of self–definition and self-congratulation, do, of course, persist and in pretty much their old force: the conservation of the past and of certain of its "values," the interpretation of the past with a view to the understanding and control of the present and the future, the advancement of scientific knowledge, the general furtherance of intelligence.

There is, however, one function of the University about which university teachers are, I think, less confident than they formerly were. This is the induction of the young person into the culture, the word "culture" being taken in this context in its old-fashioned honorific sense. The idea was that one introduced the undergraduate to the best ideals and also to the highest pleasures of the culture, giving him what is called, or used to be called, a liberal education, seeking to make him a "whole man." This intention has lost a good deal of its force. As compared with twenty-five years ago, it is seldom avowed by educators. No doubt they feel, as I do, that something has happened to the old possibilities of the young person's relation to the traditional culture. Or perhaps they feel that the culture of the past has itself undergone a change, that it has less of the ethical authority it once had.

Possibly this is because other agencies of the culture have got in their licks before the university. In one way or another, popular art, by which I mean just about any art that is available to the young person, has become much more grandiose in its moral intention than it ever was. There is scarcely a film, no matter how commercial, that does not find it to its advantage to appropriate ideas and attitudes that a few years ago were peculiar to the intellectual elite. The questions about the society that the college teacher used to hope his young student would learn to ask are now being asked, and answered, for him by popular art. Whatever a liberal education formerly meant, it must, for a very large part of the student population, mean something different in the years ahead.

INTERVIEWER: What particular problems do you think confront the university in an urban environment?

TRILLING: It's quite plain, and for reasons that everyone now sees, that the university in an urban environment is going to have an especially rough time in the coming years. But I'm inclined to think that all universities are going to be given a considerably rougher time than they have hitherto had. Their rise in status, to which I have referred, can be interpreted as an increase in power, which in the present state of political feeling makes a ground for resentment. This is confirmed by the universities' commitment of themselves to social practicality, by their conceiving their function to be that of problem-solving—in the degree that they act as social agencies, they become identified with the society, even with the government, and accordingly become

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an object of resentful criticism. Up to a few years ago, it was possible to feel that there was a growing popular sentiment in favor of the universities. The academic life was thought of as having qualities of order and coherence and uncompetitiveness that aroused an affectionate and perhaps condescending admiration. But that was when universities could still be thought of as marginal to the national life. The change in the status of the universities is leading to their being thought of as privileged vested interests and to their being regarded with envious suspicion and hostility. This new attitude is no doubt the more intense in urban environments.

INTERVIEWER: From the outset the student demonstrators at Columbia have demanded amnesty as a precondition to negotiations. What do you think is involved in the amnesty issue?

TRILLING: If I am right in my understanding of what the word "amnesty" means, it isn't the right word to denote what the students were asking for. The granting of an amnesty implies that some infraction of recognized law has been committed and that the authority accepted as being responsible for the enforcement of the law decides not to inflict the usual punishment for the infraction. But the students, in making their demand for amnesty, were saying—I believe they were explicit about this—that the University was morally so compromised as to have lost all right to judge them and to discipline them. This amounted to their saying that there no longer existed a university polity or community of which they were a part. There were of course some members of the faculty—chiefly, I think, of the so-called junior faculty—who supported the demand of the students for amnesty, but most of the faculty did not. And this was true, as I was surprised to see, even of those members of the faculty whose personal sympathy with the students was strong and overt and whose position was what came to be called radical. I think that what led them to resist the demand for amnesty was their sense that granting it would be tantamount to saying that the students were not in a real relation to the university, that there was no such entity as the university. Although they did not explicitly put it so, I think that they felt that to grant amnesty on the grounds on which the students demanded it would be to abrogate the relation between the students and themselves, to declare that the university was in fact not a polity or a community, that there were no social bonds among its members.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think has to happen before the University can be restored to a state of equilibrium?

TRILLING: That is very difficult to answer. Obviously time will have to pass and emotions will have to cool before equilibrium can be restored. I could prognosticate with more confidence if I believed that there was a record of manifest injustice at Columbia in relation to students or to any other part of the University. I don't at all believe that — on the contrary, my sense of the University's attitudes, I'll even say my sense of the Administration's attitudes, is that they have been eminently decent and humane. Representations to the contrary seem to me to be factitious or perfectionistic. At the same time, it can be said that the University has been deficient in its sensitivity to cultural change. Its sense of itself and its function has not been what it should

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have been. If one could point to abuses that are manifest and gross, the work of reform would be easy enough. But if one must deal with inadequacies in what I suppose must be called the University's self–image, the job is much chancier in its outcome. The restructuring that many, perhaps most, of us think is necessary won't of itself insure the needed change, although a general participation in that enterprise may do much good.

I'm not exactly sanguine about what is going to happen over the next few years. If there is a repetition of the incidents that lately took place, there will be polarizations between the faculty and the students, between those members of the faculty who will declare their partisanship with the students at their most radical and those members of the faculty who take any one of the many other possible positions, which will produce a sullen dullness on both sides, a grim restraint upon the élan one senses in a university that is working well.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of changes would you like to see made in the internal structure of the University?

TRILLING: It is obvious that there will have to be a greater participation by the students in the affairs of the University. Just how far that participation should go I'm not yet prepared to say. It seems to me that some of the demands made even by the moderate (but militant) students are extravagant and impracticable. At the same time I must say that the students from this group with whom I have talked were very impressive in point of their seriousness, intelligence and responsibility.

A chief difficulty in carrying out the delicate work of defining the kind and extent of the participation that is appropriate to students will of course be the injection into the deliberations of the views of the radical students, which I believe not to be in good faith. Among considerable sections of public opinion, I seem to observe, there is a tendency to believe that the satisfaction of the demand for "student power" must inevitably lead to the improved health of universities. This is a mere sentimentality. An excess of student power, we are told on reliable authority, has virtually ruined the universities of Japan.

It's plain that the faculty will have to be much more involved in the practical life of the University than it has hitherto been. There are disadvantages in this of which everyone is aware—the possibility of a politicalized faculty, rancorous in endless debate, the time that scholars and teachers will have to give to ever-multiplying committees. But these dangers and discomforts must not be exaggerated. Any number of universities have organized themselves into more democratic, more responsive, communities than ours has lately been. Partly by reason of our location in a great city, which for many implies residence in the suburbs, the Columbia faculty tends to withdraw from natural and traditional academic considerations. The day is all too likely to end at five o'clock. I can remember the time when an informal evening meeting of the Columbia College faculty to discuss a change in the curriculum would be jammed to the doors, but recently, when a series of such meetings was held to discuss Daniel Bell's report on the revision of the College curriculum, a document of great importance, they drew a shockingly scant attendance.

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Whether a restructuring of the University that will give the faculty more responsibility in the general life of the University will have the effect of overcoming the tendency of an urban faculty to resist other activities than teaching and research is a question whose answer must await the event.

As things have recently developed, any consideration of the part that the faculty ought to play in the making of the University's decisions will inevitably involve a consideration of the role of the untenured teaching staff, those below the rank of assistant professor. Many members of this group have become intensely politicalized, possibly even more than the students. Obviously their interests ought to be represented, but the question of how far their influence in the University ought to extend makes a delicate question and is likely to make a sticky situation. In the nature of the case, egalitarian considerations aren't really relevant, although I am sure that efforts will be made to prove the opposite. The impermanence of the young teaching staff, which of course no one in university life understands as a hardship or a degradation, makes it inappropriate and impracticable for them to have an influence equal to that of the permanent faculty on the basis of one man, one vote.

INTERVIEWER: Have your feelings about the Columbia situation changed a great deal during the course of events? Are your feelings very different now from what they were at the outset?

TRILLING: It's amazing to me how difficult I find it to answer that question. If we speak of feelings, I scarcely know what mine now are, or even if I have any at all. And I find it increasingly hard to recollect what my feelings were at the beginning of the troubles or at any point in between. All I can recall is that I had a great many feelings and that they were all intense. Very likely my present neutralized state is the result of fatigue. The nearest thing to a feeling that I can now recall or experience is my puzzled preoccupation with what the students are and want. I'm not in the dark about the hard-core radical students, the SDS—I think I quite understand them. It's the relatively moderate but still militant students that make the puzzle for me. I can't in the least draw upon my own attitudes as a student to help me toward comprehension. Like all my friends at college, I hadn't the slightest interest in the university as an institution: I thought of it, when I thought of it at all, as the inevitable philistine condition of one's being given leisure, a few interesting teachers and a library. I find it hard to believe that this isn't the natural attitude and when I hear about present student attitudes and demands, as it were in the abstract, they seem to me to be chiefly incomprehensible, even absurd, or, sometimes, merely willful and mischievous. But it has almost never failed that when I meet the students themselves—I've interviewed many of them as part of the work of the Executive Committee of the Faculty—I find that, contrary to my first expectations, I have great respect for them and that their demands at least begin to make sense. I think that what happens is that when I confront them personally I see them in their cultural and social situation, and since I understand why this should arouse their antagonism and rebelliousness, I am the better able to see why they

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should direct their protest at the university, which they take to be representative of the society, as the part of the society with which they are most immediately involved and which is most accessible to their protest. My seeing this doesn't prevent me from thinking that they are wrong in dealing with the university as if it were perfectly continuous with the society, or as it it were the microcosm of the society. Both Noam Chomsky and Stuart Hampshire tried to correct this view in speaking to student audiences here. If it should persist, if students conduct themselves toward the university as if its shortcomings and anomolies produced the same kind of effect as the shortcomings and anomolies of the society, or of a particular government, the academic life will soon be made impossible.

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Alan Friedman

INTERNATIONAL LOVE

Mostly I ate out in Paris, the cheapest places. But the few staples I did buy, I bought in the store just downstairs from me, so two or three times a week I got to talk to the greengrocer. "You didn't know? But yes certainly." My greengrocer's eyes and ears went up together, a child's fat face with a big moustache, and he told me he hated her frothily: standing amidst his lettuce and leeks, into the sawdust he spat freely. I gathered that my landlady Madame Dijour was a rent-gouger. She owned four or five houses in the neighborhood and she was charging me three times the rent I should have been paying. "Miser and pig, ah, she's well-off but you can get nothing from her, not if your wall folds or your ceiling rips. But her husband, ah that was a jewel, a good man, a gentleman, and in this neighborhood a friend, a leader. Well of course, yes in the Resistance, tortured by the Nazis, killed. God will pay them back what they did to him. But she, the one upstairs, the Queen, he left her all this, and she's worse than the Nazis, you don't know the half, I assure you. The way she treats that little girl of hers, that alone, they could hang her for."

I had heard noises downstairs, whimpering noises I couldn't identify. My landlady had me worried. She was a dyed blonde whose plump face must have become unappetizing somewhere along the line. After I'd heard the story of her husband's torture, I seemed to see it in her face and voice. Each of her eyes had a different shape, sagging and rimmed like two healed cuts on a tree trunk. When she talked to me in her skeptical, twittering French — "Good evening? What time is it. Early for you?" — question marks came out in all the wrong places.

The idea of going home at night began to make me nervous

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because she seemed to be lying in wait for me. Regular as clockwork, after an evening of coffee and pernod on the boulevard, I used to start worrying about Jacqueline and her mother. I lived on the top floor. I used to sneak in at the ground floor entrance like a burglar — I'd wait one minute until the timer had turned off all the lights on the stairs — and then I'd tiptoe upstairs, trying to slip past my landlady's door on the first landing. It got so that I was afraid of the door itself — morbidly nervous about the way it had of suddenly snapping partway open . . . because the stairs would squeak, and Madame Dijour would catch me more than half the time. "You're going to bed" — with that chopping innuendo — "Now?"

Her voice was bright, steely. She knew not one word of English. With her French participles she seemed to be snapping her longnailed thumbs; imperatives and subjunctives flashed round me this way and that with a sneer and a controlled hiss. "Turn it so, insert the key softly, incredible hour, I might suggest you remove your shoes *before*." Even matters of information were delivered with hints and barbs — "Rushing in again, no, not you, your countrymen, the news looks bad tonight?" And in her simplest phrases something vaguely indecent. "You're going to bed? You're going to sleep? Everything all right?" Not seductive — she'd never invite me in. She'd just begin by complaining about the noise on the stairs, then switch to the international situation, her favorite topic — swaying there in that yellow doorslit of hers in her opaque nightgown at midnight or 1:00 A.M. and asking me if I'd heard the latest news bulletins.

So it wasn't until the afternoon her door suddenly opened wide and she invited me in that I finally got to see what the whimpering noises were all about.

The gendarme in her parlor startled me. "It's all right," my landlady said. "Don't stand there like a donkey. You've done nothing wrong."

As usual I was wrapped in brown burly secondhand clothes. But I felt neither very warm nor well enough concealed. In the dry winter air the points of my hair stood out, dishevelled and electric like my thoughts.

"Monsieur," the officer inquired, "Monsieur *what*?" His voice wavered in its pitch, suggesting that my real name could hardly be whatever I was about to claim. I didn't think but I *felt* he had come

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to arrest me for my thoughts about Jacqueline: he held open menacingly at his waist a thick black book that was chained to his trousers' belt. "Perhaps we can walk upstairs to your apartment?"

"Please, not at all," Madame Dijour insisted. "Stay right here." Jacqueline said nothing, absorbed in her schoolwork. "You can discuss your affairs here."

I thought of objecting. But the police officer had already begun writing my answers before he began asking me questions. "Very good, you are a student? You are American? Age, please." He had been oiled: a half-empty bottle and a couple of glasses rested on the table.

There were two animals asleep in the apartment. The pregnant cat I had often seen on the stairs lay curled in a basket; on the chair alongside Jacqueline slept the little dog. "And you have occupied the premises above, renting from Madame Dijour, for three months?" Seated at the smaller table, Jacqueline dipped her drying sunflower face from book to book — evidently translation.

Twice a week for the last three months now I had been giving her lessons in English composition. In fact, when I had first tried to come to terms with her mother about the rent, Madame Dijour had insisted on English lessons for her little girl. These were not a favor, she had explained, not a voluntary matter; they were something I would owe above and beyond my rent. But I didn't regret the arrangement, on account of the little girl's doglike pathos, and something else. I was nineteen, she was fifteen. And when she'd sit at my kitchen table and lean forward to look into my big dictionary, I'd lean too as her skirt rode up, and I'd study the cursive script her blue veins traced on the shaded dry yellow scrolls of her inner thighs. When she'd catch me by glancing up unexpectedly, I always thought I was going to discover from the look in her eyes what went on downstairs at her mother's. I kept thinking about her father. Jacqueline had eyes like faintly tarnished medals earned for unknown acts of heroism, and I looked at their large dry surfaces to discover what willpower, what hand-to-hand combat, what sacrifice, and I learned nothing — or rather something else — that I'd been leaning too far, and that she regarded me with suspicion. After a while she'd go back to work, and while she scribbled, always with many little elegant curls of her penmanship, I schemed to take and gently guide the stamen of her pen and the little cluster of her hand over the page so that her ink

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would flow in flawless English and the angle of my elbow could touch the bell of her breasts. And I did no such thing.

But at night I'd try to imagine what it was that Madame Dijour was doing to her, what it was that left Jacqueline looking like a field of crushed flowers. Over the months my night life in Paris had become a lively and depressing burlesque. Sometimes I imagined Madame Dijour asleep in her warm bed and Jacqueline naked and shivering in a cage fixed into the wide-open window, and I wanted to slip through my window and crawl down the wall and sneak through her window and unlock the cage and cover her icy flesh with my body, but I didn't, because in my fantasy my own window, when I reached it, was stuck, warped and clotted with a luminous mold. Or sometimes as my wits wandered toward sleep I imagined that Madame Dijour had been in the pay of the Nazis and ratted on her husband for whose murder she'd had her own daughter deliberately framed and condemned to serve in the galleys, and Jacqueline there became a kind of Saint Jeanne Valjean, and she was rowing naked and sweating, and I wanted . . . but I didn't. So maybe you can imagine what an ordeal it was for me when the gendarme in her mother's parlor quietly asked to see my passport and began checking it against a list he kept in his thick black book.

I had no idea what he was investigating, but I was young enough so that it actually didn't occur to me to ask. I simply handed over my passport, which I always carried, and said to Jacqueline in slow English, as calm and gay as you please, "Jacqueline, what country am I from?"

She didn't answer. She looked up — yellow skin and yellow-white eyes — sucked her underlip in, then looked away . . . immobile, suspicious features that would some day be jowled like her mother's but were now just short of ripeness, pale plentiful hair pulled very tight, and a thin throbbing throat. For all the yellow blossom of her face and those breasts which were already swaying flowercups, she was skinny everywhere else — stemlike, stalklike, her inflexible arms, her in-folding shoulders, the hardly-any bumps of her hips. But in my mind's eye an older Jacqueline, surprisingly honored at graduation for her progress in English, had been chosen to deliver the valedictory address (her theme, International Love); and God! it was my own tongue-tied Jacqueline, now speaking passionate English stark naked before a thrilled auditorium; and afterwards I tried to rise with a

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splendid gesture to congratulate my pupil, extending not my hand but, "Your exact rent please? Per month, Monsieur."

Madame Dijour said loudly, "Eighteen hundred francs." She paused, then repeated the figure firmly.

This was one-quarter of the correct amount. So it was she, not I, who was threatened . . . a rent-control check. Was it a mere formality by now? . . . had the cop been bribed? . . . what would my grocer have answered? I saw now why she had always refused to give me rent receipts. But if I called her bluff now, I stood to lose my pupil. Jacqueline translated busily; so I nodded.

"May I see your receipts," the officer asked while writing.

Madame Dijour's eyes arched separately.

Jacqueline with one slow lean arm began to stroke the dog; it stirred. I stirred, the soft stroke on my skin. "I always throw them away."

The officer dipped his head slyly; we were all now in collusion. He finished the rest of his drink. He closed his book and his pen officially, patted Jacqueline's head genially, and closed the door: gone. "It is evident," Madame Dijour said, "that you know how to handle the police." Her mouth was rosy and goldflecked. "And now you will have your reward." You can imagine what I thought.

Her sagging eyes rose to a pointed pause . . . nothing happened . . . and "*Jacqueline*!" Jacqueline rose calmly, obediently, refilled her mother's glass, and filled a clean glass for me.

American students in Paris, the international situation, English composition — we talked about awful things. The first chance I could I said to Jacqueline in English, "How's your homework — easy?" Catching her eye, I tried to wink . . . but it didn't come off, and she only shrugged her thin neck. She motioned for the dog.

"Sss! Poupee!" The dog Poupee stalked obediently past the basket in which the pregnant cat lay dozing, and growled. The cat's eyelids flickered; its jaws opened and it seemed to sigh. Jacqueline caught the dog — it wasn't much bigger than a cat — she scooped it up with a sudden, shy bend and played with its ears. She said in English (startling me), "She is Poupee." (A dirty mop of a dog.) And pointing to the cat, "She is Bijou."

"You see, you *can* speak English," I said. I felt better — gratified to hear her try.

"Jacqueline has never performed very well at school," her mother

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informed me. "A pity. Mathematics and languages are particular weaknesses, they require the kind of discipline for which she has no aptitude. But with an American in the house, it is a golden opportunity? And perhaps when the Soviet Occupation comes, she will have occasion to learn Russian — eh, Jacqueline."

It was an odd remark with a suggestion of malice in it — did she suspect something about me and Jacqueline? Did she expect a Russian billet in her upstairs apartment? I tried, "You expect war again in the near future?"

"Yes certainly, soon, very soon," she assured me, "though perhaps I will not be in Paris." She drank, then leaned forward and said in her most compelling, mocking tone, "Did you know — how could you know? — listen, at Poitiers in my mother's house I have a vehicle, an automobile, which I keep always stocked with provisions and with a loaded rifle. At the very first signs of trouble between the great powers, of which there have been many during the past years, I have always fled immediately to Poitiers. There at Poitiers I listen continually to the radio. Should there be a more serious sign, I would immediately flee with Jacqueline in the automobile along a route to the Spanish border which I have already planned, to a village in Spain which is already designated. I will not wait this time."

"You really expect to know in advance this time?"

"I don't ever wait to find out. Jacqueline and I and the animals have gone often to Poitiers, eh little beast?" For an instant I thought she meant Jacqueline, but she clicked her fingers and the dog wriggled loose from Jacqueline and came to her at once.

She put it on her lap, saying, "Though of course we shall all be blown to bits by the new bombs, not even Spain will be safe. Tell me, Monsieur, what do you think, are men beasts? Are they capable of reason and foresight? Or will fear make them intelligent — like my little girl here. Have you seen her tricks?" I thought she meant Jacqueline, but with one hand she took the dog by its collar. With her other hand she reached under her own collar, and the nightmare began.

"Please, mother," Jacqueline said, tilting her head.

There was a long pause . . . I cleared my throat . . . "Pastry," her mother said. "Quick." I remember I was sitting in a rocking chair and I began to rock in it nervously. My pupil disappeared into

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the kitchen and came out again in moments with a plate of pastry. She offered me a piece, offered her mother a piece, then put the plate down near me. Deliberately, she avoided looking at me.

I said, "May I offer Jacqueline some pastry?" I lifted the plate.

"Jacqueline has no desire for pastry, I assure you."

She stood by her mother's chair, a twig of her mother in a short skirt. I wanted to resist . . . though I had no idea yet what I was resisting . . . I said, "How do you know unless you ask her?"

Unruffled, quite sweet, Madame Dijour shook her blonde head, then craned her neck round so that the flesh wrinkled like a braid. "Jacqueline, there, you see, there are some extra pieces of pastry, would you like one?"

Her tone was inviting. There was a split second in which Jacqueline tried to decide which way her mother wanted the tipping situation to right itself. She bent and touched the dog's fur with her lips. "No, mother." She took the dog.

"Give me that dog," Madame Dijour said. The dog was returned. "Eat that." Jacqueline took the plate. It all happened rapidly and was said softly. "Now eat."

Self-conscious, with restraint, Jacqueline began to eat. She kept her medal eyes pinned to her mother.

With the dog on her lap, Madame Dijour took a sewing needle from just under the inside of her elegant lapel and said to me, "Watch. I suspect you have failed so far to appreciate this fine animal." Holding the dog down, she placed the point of the sewing needle against the animal's black snout. She pressed, and the dog began to whimper — no squeal, no bark, only a high-pitched faraway complaint. "You see," she continued, "not to cry out, that is the lesson, that is the hard thing." She withdrew the point, the dog wrenched its head, she forced the point again into the snarling snout — the black lips lifted into a snarl, nearly soundless except for the remote whimper.

She said, "You can inquire of my husband."

Jacqueline had stopped eating.

In her basket the cat's tail swept and twitched in an arc against her sleeping body.

The needle approached again. The dog's helpless eyes, already vast and rheumy, opened wider — the pincushion nose could take it

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no longer — and suddenly the bitch barked. The noise was stunning. Her head jerked sideways, then shot forward, teeth snapping at her mistress's hand. The needle fixed itself in the animal's upper palate, visibly.

The noise — the rapid motion — were instantaneous and repeated. Terrified squealing *with* terrifying barking — the sounds of two separate dogs locked teeth to throat — the jaws bared, another lunge at the needle, and another, and always the teeth closed over the shaft and the point sank into the half-open palate. Until finally no motion, no sound, and Madame Dijour could put the point into the dry snout at will. Poupee remained rigid. There was not even whimpering now, only the redrimmed watching eyes.

"When the Germans were in Paris during the war," she said, "my husband cried out."

At the surge of barking, even Bijou the cat had begun to stretch. She had risen up in her basket on two legs at the sound, then stretched again. Too pregnant to bother, she curled heavily around, meaning to retire perhaps. But she came instead, evidently by long-established habit — many-teated, sagging, and shaking her paws as though wet — to the foot of Madame Dijour's chair. "If he had not cried out," she said.

There was no attempt to finish the phrase. She lowered the dog to the floor.

My pupil's yellowish cheeks were now white, veined over the jaws and red at the bones, as if she were out in the cold. I had begun a strange slow rocking in my chair — with what feelings I don't know — terror? compassion? hatred? — I had ceased to exist, I think, just as if from the very beginning the dog's torment had wiped me out. I don't remember myself there; I just remember It: It whimpering, It rocking, It mouthless, It freezing, It pushing a needle.

On the floor Poupee lay on her back, quite still, even her eyes still. Obediently, Bijou's left paw shook with that wet motion again, then the cat's bored claws came through their sheathes, and sank with electric viciousness into Poupee's undefended snout. Well trained.

The dog made no sound — in memory I see her staring at me alone, but probably that's only a trick of memory — eyes without a plea in them, without a hope, and paws folded rigidly against her gaunt protruding breastbone. I still see the cat's paw, always the

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same one, the left, the claws thin and spread like a spider's legs — the strike so fast it can hardly be seen. But felt, yes. And I am rocking faster. The rungs of the chair creak slightly. Besides that, there is only one sound in the room — a whimpering. Not Poupee's of course. Jacqueline's mouth is closed, she is slowly chewing her pastry, the sound comes from there. With all the life left in me I want to rise, to mother her, to marry her, to caress her, to love her. But I don't rise. Her eyes are yellow like Poupee's but smaller, and she is moaning. I hear it still.

Days later we sat through the next lesson in my kitchen, neither of us saying or doing anything out of the ordinary. But when she began as usual to recopy her composition, I took the hand that held her pen in my own hand. She looked at me in a way that seemed meant to end the lesson. We kissed. When her tongue came out suddenly to taste mine, I thought she'd be my first French girl, and I took her close . . . but no, she escaped right through the door of my apartment and downstairs in through the door of her mother's apartment.

A couple of days after that, when I came tiptoeing anxiously up to my place, key in hand, I distinctly heard the cat wailing. The laundry room from which the sound came was opposite my door. I went in cautiously.

My pupil was in there. She seemed excited, skinny, tired — leaning against one wall, her shiny elbows tight against her waist, her flowerbell breasts pressed between her arms. It was a bare room, just the big laundry sink, a bucket and mop, four grey walls and a closet door. I sensed that the two of us must be alone in the house, and I began to have thoughts, concrete thoughts . . . would she feel less afraid of discovery here in the empty laundry room with me . . . or could she be persuaded to come to my bed across the hall? Against the door of the closet the cat Bijou rubbed its back peculiarly.

"Go away," Jacqueline said. "Please." Something had changed. Clearly I was unwanted. Yet in some way I couldn't fathom, she did somehow seem excited by my arrival . . . and yet exhausted. I went to her and touched the slope of her shoulder. I never touched her again after that. The moment I caressed her, the cat's wail modulated to a new pitch. My movement must have done something — increased Bijou's urgency — the gyrations against the closet

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door changed to frantic clawing. Her claws audibly tore through the surface of the wood. She must just have had her kittens — I hadn't noticed any change in her heaviness, as a matter of fact. It was Jacqueline's face I'd read: emptied, sagging with fatigue and joy, as if she'd given birth in pain. I asked, "Did you lock her kittens in the closet?"

She didn't answer.

Slowly horrified at her expression, I said, "Did you drown Bijou's kittens?"

Her eyes were fixed on the closet door; she hadn't been crying. Except for an irregular swallowing, except for an almost imperceptible rubbing of her childlike wrists against her thighs, she was very still, she hadn't moved since I'd come into the room, I doubt if she'd actually looked at me more than an instant. But now — I was startled — she gently pinched my arm. It was slight, but evidently important; she had decided to share something with me. "No," she said finally, "they are alive. Six. Four black kittens and two grey-and-white. I have given them to Poupee."

I thought I hadn't heard correctly. "You gave the kittens . . . to the dog?"

"Don't be afraid. She wants kittens, too, yes, and she will love them as much as Bijou. But I have disciplined Bijou now, which she deserves." She was very happy.

I forgot all about Jacqueline. I tried the closet door. It was locked.

She was on her way downstairs. Had I wanted . . . ? I almost lost my voice. "Jacqueline!" Jacqueline was gone. "Give me the key!" The cat stood on her hind legs, straining for the knob as though to help me — I tried to force the door.

The new noise must have wakened them inside . . . the dog began to bark . . . a piercing maternal yapping sound . . . a bark of triumph . . . and the six newborn blind bits of kitten flesh began to pipe . . . shrill, faint, so many, with such energy . . . the cat went wild at the doorknob — and I heard Jacqueline's terrible loving vengeance, her motherly delight, the dog's brute throat exploding through the woodwork, proclaiming that there was justice on earth, that love followed patience, that after mutilation came six puppies.

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ARGUMENTS

THE TURNER THESIS

Michael Thelwell

Dr. Robert Coles's review of William Styron's *Confessions of Nat Turner*[1] dismisses certain very real problems presented by this work which, according to Styron himself, is "less an historical novel . . . than a meditation on history." Dr. Coles regards questions about the book's "psychological accuracy or historical inaccuracy" as irrelevant, and does not believe that "it is the validity or historical accuracy that count all that much," yet goes on to predict that "the book will make history" and finds "it all valid." But Dr. Coles cannot have it both ways.

The contradictory nature and strangely defensive tone of the review seem to derive from Dr. Coles's determination to endorse at least the effort if not the accomplishment of the novel. While he appears to be aware, as earlier reviewers were not, of certain racial issues raised by the book, he never discusses them. As a psychologist who has worked with Southern Negroes (the anecdote about the Mississippi sharecropper which comprises the first third of the review establishes his credentials) and who presumably knows the "Negro mind," he simply pronounces the book "valid."

But the question of historical accuracy cannot be lightly dismissed since in the terms the author sets up and in which the book has been generally accepted and is being read, one of the major claims made for the book is a responsibility to "the essential truths of history." And this is precisely the issue, not the changing of one or two of the known facts of Turner's life. What is objectionable in the novel is the entire process of selection, invention and emphasis in the use of materials surrounding Turner's life, and the clear manner in which these distortions cumulatively serve to present a peculiarly southern view of black history not supported by the known facts.

Why is it that most black readers find the characterization of Nat Turner in the novel unacceptable, while most whites, to judge from the reviews, find him perfectly credible and perhaps even comforting?

1 *PR*, Spring 1968.

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The answer to this question lies in the very real differences in attitude, world-view and self-definition so glibly glossed over by the currently fashionable terms "black consciousness" and "white consciousness." Part of this response does have to do with what Christopher Lasch calls the blacks' search for "a usable past." But this does not mean that American history is being subjected to "the meatgrinder of black nationalist historical revision" with its implications of reckless invention and ideological rewriting. The question is more one of revising and expanding certain orthodox white assumptions, and adding to the currently limited arsenal of terms, categories and definitions through which white historians have structured black history. *Black necessity has less to do with* manufacturing *a history than with the excavation, articulation and* legitimization *of what has been ignored or misrepresented in our history.*

Assume that it is possible for a twentieth-century white southern writer to tune in on the thought patterns, beliefs, impulses and world–view of a black slave in the eighteen-thirties. There are undoubtedly literary terms in which such a psychological and historical leap is possible, and there are many instances, from Shakespeare to Tolstoy, of seemingly successful re-creations of a remote or alien experience. But for a white southerner writing from a black point of view, this kind of leap necessitates disengagement from that pervasive accumulation of white mythology about black people, and from that vast tradition of literary cliché, racial stereotype and the romantic and sentimental version of history that is his own particular cultural heritage. It also requires his acquiring a sensitivity to aspirations, sensibilities and attitudes, to a black cultural and linguistic tradition which is at odds with most of his class assumptions.

That Mr. Styron was not oblivious to these problems can be seen from his brilliant and candid essay, "This Quiet Dust," (*Harper's* Magazine, April, 1965). (There is an interesting, but tangential, problem implicit in the way in which Mr. Styron was able in his essay to engage questions which he could not in his novel, and it is perhaps because the novel is so much more intimate, less detached and less rational than the essay.)

"My boyhood experience," he tells us in the essay, "was the typically ambivalent one of most native southerners, for whom the Negro is simultaneously taken for granted and the object of unending concern. . . . My feelings seem to have been confused and blurred, tinged with sentimentality, colored by a great deal of folklore, and wobbling always between a patronizing affection . . . and downright hostility. Most importantly my feelings were completely uninformed by that intimate

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knowledge of black people which most southerners claim as their special patent; indeed they were based on almost total ignorance."

This knowledge, he writes, came from a distance, "as though I had been watching actors in an all black puppet show." He concludes that "one of the most egregious of southern myths" is that of the white southerner's boast that "he knows the Negro." A major factor in this distance is the effect of "the sexual myth" which he says "needs to be reexamined." "Surely a certain amount of sexual tension between the races continues to exist," he writes, "and the southern white man's fear of sexual aggression on the part of the Negro male is still too evident to be ignored. . . . While it cannot be denied that slavery times produced a vast amount of inter-breeding . . . it is impossible not to believe that theories involving a perpetual sexual 'tension' have been badly inflated." (Later in the essay when he discusses the Turner insurrection, Styron says he finds it interesting that "the Negroes did not resort to torture, nor were they ever accused of rape. Nat's attitude toward sex was Christian and highminded, and he had said: 'we will not do to their women what they have done to ours.' ")

The Southerners' ignorance of the Negro, Styron notes, has its effect on his literature. "Most southern white people cannot know or touch Negroes," a gulf reflected even in "the work of a writer supremely knowledgeable about the south as William Faulkner, who confessed a hesitancy about attempting to 'think Negro,' and whose Negro characters, as marvellously portrayed as most of them are, seem nevertheless to be meticulously *observed* rather than *lived*." (Faulkner, in retrospect, proves the wiser, as we shall see, and Styron should have given a great deal more thought to the reasons behind the canny Mississippian's "hesitance.")

And, in the essay, Styron summed up the political nature of Nat's insurrection: "That the insurrection was not purely racial, but perhaps obscurely premarxist, may be seen by the fact that a number of dwellings belonging to poor white people were pointedly passed by."

Significantly, his comments on Turner's place in the slave society is quite different from that found in the novel: "his gifts for preaching, for prophecy, and his own magnetism seem to have been so extraordinary that he grew into a rather celebrated figure among Negroes of the county, his influence even extending to whites, one of whom — a poor, half-cracked, but respectable overseer named Brantley — he converted to the faith and baptised in a mill pond."

Styron assumes the white southerner's ignorance of blacks to be a recent phenomenon. But the evidence is that slave masters and over-

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seers had no more intimate an understanding of blacks than do their descendants. As the first real leisure class produced in this country, and under the pressure of its morally ambivalent position, the slave-holding south devoted much energy to rationalizing and justifying its situation. The resulting elaborately articulated regional mythology — a guilt-generated, intelligence-perverting, self-serving view of race — limited the perception and evaluation of experience. With a few concessions to changed social realities, this system still provides the basis for white racism in the nation.

In the portrait the South created of itself slaveholders were much maligned, benevolent Christians whose concern for and services to their chattel far outweighed, they felt, the labor they extracted in return. Their slaves were simple, childlike subhuman types of limited intelligence and potential who were basically happy and contented with their lot. But it is clear from the most cursory look at plantation records that only the most obtuse slaveowners ever really believed this. What emerges from these documents is that the more perceptive whites recognized that they were almost totally ignorant of what really went on in the minds of their property.

Kenneth Stampp's *The Peculiar Institution* cites many texts which indicate the extent to which slaveholders were aware of the blacks' concealed loyalties, values, social, legal and moral codes. The question is: how does what we know of the historical Nat Turner fit into a framework of a slave culture and society which was zealously protected from white scrutiny. As Stampp reports, one Virginian observed his slaves to have "sharp faculties" and "extremely fine and acute perceptions." Another found his to be "so deceitful" that he could never "decipher their character" or "get at the truth." According to an overseer, any white man who trusted a Negro "was a damned fool." In 1851 a slave master bemoaned the "notorious fact that on every large plantation of Negroes, there is one among them who holds a kind of magical sway over the minds and opinions of the rest; to him they look as their oracle. . . . The influence of such a Negro, often a preacher, on a quarter, is incalculable." Clearly, these indications of a black community response to slavery are important, not only to blacks in search of their true history, but to any understanding of what must really have taken place in Southhampton County in 1831.

All available historical sources indicate that Nat Turner's roots and his support came from the organization and the culture of the slave community. His brief confession, recorded by a white lawyer in 1831, hardly mentions whites until the passages where the violence is described. (The other source to which Mr. Styron appears to have resorted is *The Southhampton Insurrection* [1900], a book written by one Wil-

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liam S. Drewry, an unabashed apologist for the "benign" institution. Styron does not appear to have considered two earlier accounts, one in 1867 by William Wells Brown, a black historian, or that of Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a white abolitionist, whose account appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1869.)

However, despite Drewry's clear conviction — repeated again and again — that Virginia's slaves were "faithful and affectionate" and represented "the happiest laboring class in the world," he reveals much that contradicts his basic position. While triumphantly citing cases of slaves hiding or protecting their masters, he is baffled by the fact that most slaves apparently knew of the planned uprising yet failed to denounce it. Though insisting that Turner was motivated by a "hideous fanaticism" and that his followers were "weak, misguided and ungrateful," Drewry never denies the political basis of the rebellion, which he attributes to abolitionist agitation and the blacks' knowledge of the Haitian revolution, refugees from which were in the county. Another factor, according to Drewry, was the presence of 1,745 free blacks in a county with a slave population of 7,756. These freemen were "prosperous, many owned land" and their presence "encouraged the slaves to the possibility of freedom." Drewry notes that "news travelled among the slaves rapidly and mysteriously," as it did among "natives of the Congo." He believes that the insurrection plot extended to neighboring counties and into North Carolina. (In his jail cell, Turner denied all implication in the North Carolina plot.)

Drewry's comments on Turner's personal history are instructive. Turner's education he attributes to his master, "assisted by his parents who were intelligent Negroes." Nancy, Nat's mother, came "direct from Africa" and was "so wild" that she had to be tied to prevent her murdering Nat at birth. (Infanticide committed by African-born mothers who preferred to see their children dead rather than slaves seems to have been frequent.) His father, described as "highspirited," ran away when Nat was a boy and was never recaptured.

Nat was a youthful strategist and leader of stealing expeditions. But Drewry attributes Nat's importance in the slave community mainly to his charlatanry, reporting that "he spat blood at will" having previously filled his mouth with dye, and that "he wrote hieroglyphics and prophecies on leaves of grass, which subsequently being found according to his prophecies, caused the slaves to believe him a miraculous being." Higginson reports that as late as the eighteen-sixties there were traditions among Virginia slaves of the "keen devices of Prophet Nat." "If he were caught with lime and lamp black conning over a half-finished county map on the barn door, he was always 'planning what to do if he were blind' or 'studying how to get to Mr. Francis' house.'"

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Despite Drewry's impulse to disparage the abilities of Turner's lieutenants, he does describe Hark as "a black Apollo" and as "the most intelligent and enthusiastic conspirator." He claims that this slave had taken the name of "a famous Negro general named Hark who served under Saood II . . . and who about 1810 carried his arms across the Euphrates and threatened Damascus." In a similar vein William Wells Brown mentions a slave Will who joins the rebellion as being "a lifelong rebel who scorned to take his master's name" and whose last words after committing great carnage with his axe were "bury my axe with me." "For he religiously believed," Brown explains, "that in the next world, the blacks would have a contest with the whites and he would need his axe."

Aside from the origins of Nat Turner in the self-image and world–view of slave culture, the search for a credible Nat Turner and an objective reconstruction of his rebellion must certainly include the effects on his young mind of his "militant" family. What passed between the young Nat and his "wild and intelligent" African mother? What was the legacy of his "high-spirited" father who successfully escaped? Or did he have nothing to say to his son before leaving? To what extent was the slave "society" that Nat refers to sustained and structured by memories and legends of Africa? Is no glimmering of the slaves' understanding of their situation to be found in their quick acceptance and adaptation of the Book of Exodus as both a metaphor of their condition and a promise of deliverance? By what devices did news circulate "rapidly and mysteriously" among the "surprisingly well-informed" but "passive and inert" Sambos? Was that haunting, dirgelike melody with its not quite "civilized" melodic patterns and antiphonal scheme the words to which were "Steal 'way, Steal 'way, Lord, ah ain't got long to stay heah," just more evidence of the darkies' simple faith?

We find no answers in Mr. Styron's meditations. Indeed, these questions, which must surely have comprised a large part of the historical Turner's consciousness, are not raised, and Styron's black people, having lost the African heritage, are by the implications of this void in the novel in danger of being deprived of the tragic, grim, yet infinitely moving and inspiring heritage created for us by those "many thousands gone" who found ways to endure and myths and ideas by which to comfort and sustain themselves.

What does it mean, for example, that the Nat Turner of the novel speaks in a highly literary, convoluted, latinate prose reminiscent of one of Charles Dickens' Victorian pedagogues? Mr. Styron has said that the language was in part determined by his desire "to make him every bit as intelligent as I possibly could."

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The language that the real Nat Turner must have spoken, preached, exhorted and plotted in still exists in the rural south. The true tenor of that language — apocalyptic, poetic, richly allusive and moving — can be seen in the spirituals and bitter blues poetry — which is a familiar part of the national culture. It is a language coming out of suffering and oppression, a language of subterfuge, of sharp metaphor and parable, which implies a world-view. It is a functional, living language, rather than a formal literary one, depending on vivid similes, effective juxtaposition of images and contrasts rather than large vocabulary for its range and flexibility. It is capable of communicating incredibly subtle nuances of meaning through variation of rhythm, cadence and intonation. A credible characterization of Nat Turner demands some literary approximation of this language, and not only because many black readers feel that there is an implicit insult in Mr. Styron's giving Turner an abstract "white" language to make him "intelligent."

In the act of giving Turner a white language Styron invests him with a white consciousness. Styron's Nat is removed from the slave cabins and installed in the great house from which, isolated from his peers, he observes blacks from a distance "like actors in an all black puppet show." He is constantly observing "lines of Negroes etched against the sky," or in coffles going south. The most striking characteristic of this figure is the extent to which he operates within the context of nineteenth-century plantation owner assumptions about blacks. The voice and consciousness which operates in this novel as Turner's, perceives and defines black existence in terms which black people *have never accepted.* The underlying racism may be no more virulent than that of Faulkner, but in Faulkner's characters one recognizes a self-justifying class rhetoric quite unrelated to black consciousness.

Styron's black preacher, teacher and revolutionary sees his "black shit-eating people" as "flies," "God's mindless outcasts, lacking that will to destroy . . . their unending anguish." He describes field hands as "a disheveled ragged lot" whose voices "babble, with loutish nigger cheer" and fill him with "a loathing so intense it was akin to disgust and belly sickness." From his position in the great house, he regards "Negroes of the mill and field as creatures beneath contempt." He describes an old slave as being "simple headed and in a true state of nigger ignorance." He is revolted by a group in church who are "picking their noses, scratching, sweating and stinking to high heaven" with "faces popeyed with nigger credulity." Nowhere do his descriptions and reflections on his fellow slaves escape the exaggerated, parodic, pseudo-anthropological language of the slave-auction announcement. The only slave of any accomplishment, with any psychological integrity and purposefulness that

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the young Nat mentions is a driver, and his very occupation means that his sense of self-worth is a gift of the whites.

On the other hand, all of the inflated, self-congratulatory, sentimental white myths about their own genteel and chivalric past are accepted by Styron's Nat, who views his master "in terms of such patriarchal and spiritual grandeur as glows out from Moses on the Mount." To him white ladies possess "the disembodied, transparent beauty of an imagined angel," and appear to float "in an immaculate effulgence of purity and perfection." His master's household (in which it is not clear that the historical Turner ever set foot) where the First Families of Virginia gather for formal balls and feasts, and where he is "pampered, fondled, nudged, pinched" and educated as the "black jewel" and "spoiled child" is presented to us through Turner's eyes as a virtual temple to the "lost" elegance and gentility of the golden age of southern chivalry, a world peopled by patriarchs, demigods and angels. (That southerners wish to think that their slaves viewed their masters in these terms is clear, but that the slaves in fact did so is highly questionable. The young Nat Turner was not too awed by his master's patriarchal grandeur to organize raiding forays against his property.)

It is this mythic version of southern history that forms the ideological skeleton of the novel, and all incidents and detail flow logically from it. Turner is isolated from blacks, and influenced and motivated by "white" considerations. This denies the tradition of independent black leadership reported by Stampp and typified by Turner, since in the novel his authority is based on his master's favor and preference, and those attributes coming from his exposure to white influences. Turner hates and despises his blackness and aspires to the culture and enlightenment of his masters. His rebellion is a consequence of the inevitable frustration of these aspirations.

The old sexual myth, which Mr. Styron himself questioned in his piece in *Harper's,* becomes a dominant theme. Turner is an onanist who scorns women of his own race, and represses his lust for white women. In his case it is not white "blood" that generated his militancy — the standard explanation of earlier generations of southern writers — but his exposure to white "culture," and his sublimated sexuality.

General Hark, the "black Apollo" and "the most enthusiastic and intelligent conspirator" who Drewry believed took the name of an African warrior, becomes a dumb, shuffling darky, reduced to quivering paralysis by the sheer presence of whites, and terrified by a white woman and boy.

Brantley, the "respectable" overseer converted by Turner, becomes a retarded, child-molesting pederast, which apparently is the price he pays for abandoning his class position and violating the protocol which

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decrees that normal whites do not relate to blacks in terms of genuine respect and equality.

The slave Will who "scorned to take his master's name" and who is reported by Turner to have joined the insurrection because "his life was worth no more than others and his liberty as dear" and who was "resolved to obtain it [liberty] or lose his life" becomes another figure borrowed from plantation melodrama. He is a ravening, demented, hate–maddened monster who "sidles" into the scene stinking, licking his fangs, driven by blood lust to rape white women. In this case, the bestiality of the figure is attributed to the abuses of a cruel master rather than natural depravity, but the figure is a familiar one from a certain school of southern writing.

The rebellion is defeated by loyal slaves, armed by their masters, who attack the insurrectionists with, in Turner's words, "as much passion and fury and *even* skill" as their white masters. When three black coachmen maul the rebel Hark with "exuberance and glee," it is another indication of the benevolence of the enlightened, aristocratic Virginia gentleman, whose slaves were contented, loyal and believed themselves superior to "field niggers." Not only did no such confrontation take place, but all the evidence suggests that the majority of slaves placed more importance on their standing in the slave community, with its own rules and values, than on the goodwill of their masters. In general, the emphasis on the slaves' worshipful affection for "the quality" is at odds with the radical implications of the "obscurely pre-marxist" forces Mr. Styron mentioned in his *Harper's* essay.

There are many other instances of the influence of prevailing myths on Mr. Styron's historical recreation. For example, Nat's doubts about his ability to cope with the freedom promised him by his master (who is presented, with no discernible irony, as being inhibited from freeing all his slaves only by his fears for their survival in that unaccustomed condition) are inexplicable in light of what Drewry reports about the free black population of the county.

It would be too optimistic for blacks to expect the white literary and scholarly establishment to abandon the comfortable myths, traditions and habits of many lifetimes to undertake the reassessment of black historical and cultural contributions and realities. But we must insist — a burden no other minority appears to have — on our prerogative to define this heritage in *terms* of our own choice. This is necessary not only to black needs of the moment, but to fill a vacuum in the total history, consciousness and sensibility of the nation. By glossing over that vacuum and denying by implication the very existence of our own terms, this novel reinforces the foolish and dangerous notion that

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the black community participates in the myths of its oppressors and shares the same perceptions of historical experience. It is in this sense that the novel is "reactionary."

Robert Coles

I find it very hard to answer Mr. Thelwell. I have admired his writing since I first came across it in the articles "Fish are Jumping An' the Cotton is High: Notes from the Mississippi Delta" and "Bright An' Mownin' Star" in the Spring and Fall issues respectively of the *Massachusetts Review*. I say *his* writing because he wrote as a writer; not a Negro writer, not an activist who has decided to put something down on paper, but a very gifted observer who can describe the Mississippi Delta every bit as eloquently as the white man from Oxford, Mississippi, he quotes and admires.

I hope the reader will look up those two pieces. The "uncertainty, fear, even desperation" that Thelwell mentions are still around — down in the Delta, in Nat Turner's Virginia and in New York City. The near–starvation he describes also still exists, and it would seem that the President of the United States has other things on his mind than such minor embarrassments to the "free world." Anyway, to recognize terribly wounded and hungry people one doesn't have to be "a psychologist who has worked with Southern Negroes," or have any "credentials" or know too much about that absurd categorization "the Negro mind," which is one of about a million vulgar, dramatic expressions floating around today. Yet, enormous dignity, courage, resourcefulness and yes, style can exist side-by-side with terror and its degrading consequences, though I am afraid that people like me, with all our "credentials," aren't likely to appreciate that fact. Faulkner and Ralph Ellison, yes; but not the psychiatric label-mongers — who intimidate, I suspect, all too many writers, people I would expect to know better.

Mr. Thelwell essentially says Mr. Styron has *a* view of Nat Turner, and one not sufficiently redemptive, to use the word I used. Whites still don't see the "true tenor" of not only Negro language, but the Negro "world-view." And Styron in particular has not transcended himself, the white Southerner, the man who cannot disengage himself from the "pervasive accumulation of white mythology about black people" which emerges through Styron's Nat in an acceptance of "all of the

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inflated, self-congratulatory, sentimental white myths about their own genteel and chivalric past." Mr. Thelwell implies that the Negro has never accepted those myths. But what has happened to the sense of irony and ambiguity that Mr. Thelwell has already demonstrated in his earlier writing? Does he really believe that outrage — based on actual self-respect or a yearning for it — cannot smolder in people who are also beaten, intimidated and driven to self-hate? Or that people cannot accept what they have to (even believe it right they should) *and also* dream every night about power and vengeance?

Mr. Thelwell has written at even greater length on *The Confessions of Nat Turner* ("Styron and Turner," *The Massachusetts Review,* Winter, 1968). There as well as here he keeps on going back to the novel's failure to encompass and indeed highlight the "tradition of . . . black leadership" and the development of an independent "black consciousness" in the Negro community. In fact, sadly, it is Styron (and not, for example, many of our historians) who has brought Nat's leadership to our attention and made us all think about his anguished struggle for independence, of mind as well as body. For doing so he is told that his novel "reinforces the foolish and dangerous notion that the black community inhabits the myths of its oppressors and shares the same historical experience." If only victims didn't "participate emotionally" in what happens to them at the hands of their oppressors. If only the weak didn't learn to believe (but sometimes struggle against believing) the myths that powerful plantation owners, corporation presidents and commissars all forcefully propagate. If only blacks could thoroughly, decisively separate their historical experience from their "perceptions" of that experience. If only Jews hadn't learned self–loathing and suspicion and a desperate clannishness based on the living, breathing fearful historical intimacy of the diaspora, the ghettos only *so* walled-off from the far-flung *goyim.* If only we all didn't envy the rich and the wellborn, and wish to be like them, and dream about their kind of living, and hate ourselves for doing so and then find ourselves doing it again, damn it.

Well, we can go on and on with this terrible, vexing question. I see what bothers Mr. Thelwell — the fake, pietistic condescension that is everywhere in America, and afflicts (by the way) more than 20,000,000 blacks; but I think he and others are utterly wrong in using William Styron as their scapegoat. As I said again and again in the review, Styron wrote a novel, *his* novel. (And novels make their *own* history, which is the kind of history I was talking about.) Thelwell's Nat Turner would of course be different, and not be "valid" automatically because Thelwell is black and knows "the black mind," or because Thelwell had been coached by a collection of historians and

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psychiatrists. Hopefully, Thelwell's Nat would be a powerfully drawn character in a strong, convincing novel.

I think Styron's big mistake was to write that preface, and bring up all the business about history and meditation on history. Did Tolstoy have to apologize or explain himself for using (and speculating on the thoughts and purposes and fate of) Napoleon and the Tsar and his court and all sorts of real-life Russian generals in *War and Peace*? But of course, Tolstoy lived in a more "backward" age, when nervous self-consciousness and the need for scientific justification hadn't made poets worry about "relevance" and novelists or essayists about "methodology."

Styron is a novelist, and incidentally, one who can be powerfully satiric. (For some reason Thelwell is bothered rather than vastly amused by the way white ladies are made to possess "the disembodied, transparent beauty of an imagined angel" or made to float "in an immaculate effulgence of purity and perfection.") As a novelist Styron is not writing revisionist history or one of those (by now, I hope, boring) psychoanalytic "interpretations" of Nat Turner's "acting-out," his "characterological" rebelliousness. Of course Styron is white. Of course he is Southern, and linked, as such, to a "tradition" and a specific "cultural heritage." Of course he puts a certain, stylized speech into Nat's mouth, and *presumes* (what writers do, after all) to make a particular person out of him, with a certain coherence and consistency to his mind and a certain story to his life. That in Nat's very mind there were many Nats, waiting for perhaps other novelists, goes without saying. I thought it was only political ideologues and perhaps people like me who claim *the* truth — and rush to call everyone else sick, or devious, or yes, "reactionary." But at least Mike Thelwell uses quotes around that last word of his argument. There is still hope.

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THEATER

THE SEASON

I saw forty-eight productions this season, about evenly divided between Broadway, off-Broadway and off-off-Broadway. Even so, I missed (for a variety of reasons) a few events which other critics thought important: Julie Bovasso's marathon play at La Mama; *Conquest of the Universe*, the masterwork of the Theater of the Ridiculous; and the apparently talented off-off-Broadway debuts of playwrights Roma Garth and Olwen Wymark.

My first observation, therefore, is to sound the dirge for the solitary reviewer: it is impossible for one person, even one with my compulsive instincts, to report comprehensively on the theater scene in New York. Nor is it at all clear these days what a "theater chronicle" should chronicle. Any event that takes place on a stage? Surely not, or, like the ubiquitous Barnes, I'd have to cover Merce Cunningham's first New York dance season, as well, perhaps, as Aretha Franklin's debut at Philharmonic Hall, Ronald Reagan performing as Chubb Fellow at Yale, and the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi making like Ayn Rand in drag (or is that redundant?) at the Felt Forum.

Okay, then maybe a theater chronicle should deal only with those stage events in which the spoken word is central. That definition would allow me to pass over Charlotte Moorman's full-breasted cello recital or Ralph Ortiz tearing a live chicken limb from limb (at Finch College, no less), but it would also force me to exclude the Evening of Mixed Media at the 92nd Street Y and to include Vera Zorina narrating *Peter and the Wolf*. Besides, to define theater as that which employs the traditional materials of a stage and words, is to emphasize the very elements which some theatrical experimenters are trying to discard. The champions of "environmental," "improvisational," "gut" and "kinetic" theater want to move out of buildings and into streets, to erase "artificial" boundaries between life and art, to recognize and create drama wherever we happen to be: subways, doctors' offices, urinals.

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With all categories under challenge, with each day spawning hybrids in the performing arts, a "theater reviewer," short of reporting the argument he had with his maid yesterday over a broken lamp, can reduce his obligations only by resort to the following formula: "I'm going to tell y'all about some nights I spent out on the town this year watching some people perform something." It's feeble but flexible. And it allows me all the modern prerogatives: to define a critical problem without trying to resolve it, to stand on subjective intuition, to employ the random, staccato beat, to do my thing.

So. There were two evenings that especially appealed to me: *In Circles,* and the San Francisco Mime Troupe. These are the only theatrical events I want to write about in any detail. But before doing so, let me briefly report on a number of other productions.

MICHAEL MCCLURE, THE BEARD

The most arresting part of the evening was the program notes on the author, which reported that he composes "post-psychedelic songs" in a style called "Cowboy Shiva," and also writes in a mammalian tongue he has daubed "beast language." *The Beard* was apparently a sensation in San Francisco, and it found vocal defenders in New York. It has some strengths: the originality of its basic idea (a dialogue between Billy the Kid and Jean Harlow, enshrined in some Blue Heaven) and, occasionally, its verbal ingenuity. But McClure's "fuck-you" shock tactics have by now become tedious. By the end of the evening I had to rely for enlivenment on the dialogue of the middle-aged couple seated behind me. As Billy the Kid began the well-publicized act of cunnilingus (First Time Anywhere On Any Stage!!) the embarrassed lady behind me said to her equally embarrassed escort, "Is it over?" He: "The stage is getting darker." She (ambivalent tone): "Can you still see them?"

BRUCE JAY FRIEDMAN, SCUBA DUBA

Richard Gilman has already done a definitive skewering job on this bit of banality (and at a time when all others were shouting its praises), so I'll try to be brief. Sample level of comedy: the oldish landlady says seductively to her young tenant, "My petals still open — not as often as before, but wider than ever." The crudities are matched by the clichés, even to the Jewish mother placing the guilt-provoking phone call to her son — a replay, with bad needle, of the Nichols & May original. More basic to the evening's failure is Friedman's un-

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certain shifts from pop to melodrama, from black comedy to serious editorializing about the failures of the white liberal. The most offensive part of the evening is his super-liberated stance on the race question: like wow, man, he can make *fun* of blacks! Sample: the hero confesses that on the Freedom March he met a laundress from Delaware named "Urethra" and that during King's speech they were doing it behind a tree; "*she* should have been listening," remarks the hero — to the audience's huge delight — "after all, she's colored."

To be fair, Friedman can at times be inventive and funny. The psychiatrist's blousy girlfriend, Cheyenne, is an imaginative creation ("once you get mixed up with those urban Jews it's like eating potato chips"), and occasional one-liners are hilarious (psychiatrist bidding a firm farewell to his patient: "It's time you got on your own two feet and faked your way into the adult community"). The director, Jacques Levy, whose work has been praised as extravagantly as Friedman's, must indeed share the credit with him — credit, that is, for the bizarre shifts in tone, the hysterical bad taste, the pointless vulgarities. The cast, at least, was first rate, especially Cleavon Little.

Eugene O'Neill, More Stately Mansions

A caricature of O'Neill. The fault is due partly to an expository script in which conflicts are simply stated as such rather than revealed through the interaction of the characters. José Quintero has made a bad situation worse by the quality of his adaptation and direction. He has cut in such a way as to make a hideously explicit script even more so, and (apparently mesmerized by that word *Stately*), has directed the actors so woodenly as to point up at every juncture O'Neill's penchant for flat-footed abstraction. Ingrid Bergman's beauty and presence saved her from total disaster, but just barely. Even had she learned her lines and how to project her voice, she would still have been badly miscast; her accent and her gentleness clashed incongruously with the role of a petulant, spoiled, slightly malignant Yankee.

The whole production, indeed, hung precariously between the serious and the mock, and often with hilarious results. The richness of the inadvertent humor is difficult to reproduce, relying as it did on a combination of visual and verbal effects. But picture, if you can, characters dressed in eighteen-thirties high fashion (plaid slacks, Cardin-like jackets, lace dickeys), reciting, in deadly serious voices, lines like "Lately, mother, alone at the office, I felt so weary of the game," or (after a passionate kiss between husband and wife), "I'll have to ask you to go now; the railroad directors will be here shortly." I was

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snickering so by the last act that I decided to leave — out of residual respect for O'Neill and on the bare chance that I might be disturbing some benighted neighbor actually absorbed in the damn thing.

MART CROWLEY, THE BOYS IN THE BAND

Mart Crowley has been hailed as a bright new talent, and his play about homosexuality as a breakthrough for freedom of expression in the theater. On both counts, the estimate is inflated. Crowley is essentially a gag writer, a man with a brilliant flair for one-liners. ("There's one thing to be said for masturbation: you certainly don't have to look your best.") But he can't move a plot from A to B without the construction creaking. Both the play's central situation, a straight college chum (who, of course, has gay tendencies but won't face them) stumbling into a gay birthday party, and the play's central gimmick, a telephone game of dialing the person one "truly loved in one's life," are badly established and implausibly developed. And some of the scenes, like the Negro boy's declaration of love for the son of the white family his mother cooked for, are maudlin replications from *Screen Romance.*

The play as "slice of gay life," moreover, represents a retrogressive more than a forward step for the theater if, that is, one is interested in delineating and understanding, as opposed to trivializing and marketing, the "homosexual condition." For in fact *Boys in the Band,* despite all its chic analytic references and its set acknowledgements that hysteria, depression and self-hatred are the main components of gay life, nonetheless subtly glorifies that life. For the Boys, after all, are brave and savagely self-aware; they do cope with the unlucky hand fate has dealt them, and often do so with style and wit. They are, moreover, capable of True Love, truer, it would seem, than those sad-sack old college friends who live with women mostly to avoid the panic of recognizing that they'd rather be living with men. Most of which is romantic bullshit, and dangerous to boot — for it will help to confirm homosexuals in the belief that theirs is merely a different not a lesser way (indeed, the implication is that their sensitivity and self-awareness make theirs the superior way), and to help them peddle that nonsense to the trillion relativists who inhabit the outside world. A word is due the production: Robert Moore has directed with almost extrasensory good taste and the cast, with a few exceptions, could hardly be improved upon for the authenticity of its performance.

TOM STOPPARD, ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD

Like Mart Crowley, Tom Stoppard is better at writing lines than

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scenes, is more a phrasemaker than a playmaker. On that level, he performs with undeniable brilliance. Even so, the play is, finally, unsatisfying; both the script and the manner in which it was staged in New York, suffered from confusions in point of view and tone. The Hamlet interludes were particularly uncertain, in part because the actor playing Hamlet confused effeminacy with elegance, in part because the director, unable to decide if he wanted to stage the courtiers as still lifes from a tapestry or as individuals, settled for an exaggeration of movement that was neither. Stoppard, moreover, fails to focus the characters of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. They simply alternate between idiocy and sagacity and, because Stoppard's insistent verbal cleverness always dilutes the idiocy and his straining after epigrammatic insights always compromises the sagacity, we are left with the impression that he was either unclear about his own intentions or lacked the skill and control to execute them.

ARTHUR MILLER, THE PRICE

I had mixed feelings about Miller's new play, but on the whole thought better of it than most reviewers did. It is, as many have said, moralistic, talky and frequently contrived. The production, moreover, is uneven. Boris Aronson has created a remarkable set, and there are arresting, idiosyncratic performances by Kate Reid and Harold Gary; but Pat Hingle, in the central role of Victor, veers uncertainly in his characterization, even to his accent, which slurs from Irish to Southern. Despite these inadequacies, and they do seriously compromise the evening, I was impressed by Miller's intermittent insights ("we invent ourselves to wipe out what we know") and moved by the plays central dilemma: "who's to take care of the helpless old father?" Such a theme, concerned as it is with retesting the boundaries of personal obligation, has seemed to many merely old-fashioned. In terms of current taste it is, but when that shifts, as it must, Miller's subtle inquiries will be more fully appreciated.

HAIR, BOOK AND LYRICS BY GEROME RAGNI AND JAMES RADO, MUSIC BY GALT MACDERMOTT

I don't think *Hair,* either in its original form at the Public Theater or in Tom O'Horgan's considerably revised version for Broadway, warranted all the hoopla. Certainly the cast — in both productions — knocked itself out and, with a few exceptions, seemed comfortable with hippie trappings (the exceptions were more notable in the Broadway production: Lynn Kellogg, a cool showgirl type, was badly miscast, as was the comparatively aged coauthor James Rado in the key role of

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Claude). Each of the two versions had its strong and weak points. On the whole, I preferred the original production: its relaxed pacing and honest discontinuities seemed a more appropriate re-creation of the disjunctions of East Village life than the military precision and hysterically pitched antics of the Broadway version. Yet the latter benefited from an imaginative set by Robin Wagner, striking costuming by Nancy Potts (whose work throughout the season — she was also principal designer for the APA company — was impressive), and the highly inventive, if manic direction by O'Horgan.

In any case, neither version amounted to more than decent sampling of the healthier (and less creative) aspects of hippie life. The score, which may be thought revolutionary by Broadway standards, is hardly innovative in the context of the rock scene. Some numbers — like "Good Morning Starshine" are pure Fantasticks schlock. And certain lyrics ("how dare they try to end this beauty" — i.e., pot) confirmed my feeling that *Hair* is a packaged version of What the New Generation Is Up To, scaled not to the patrons of Fillmore East, but to those of the musical comedy theater.

Yet in terms of authenticity, *Hair* is to *Your Own Thing* (winner this year of the New York Drama Critics Circle "best musical" award) as *My Fair Lady* is to *Hallelujah Baby!*. Only in the context of the worst season in years for musicals, can *Your Own Thing* be called outstanding. It does boast a witty and ingratiating final half hour, but the caliber of most of the evening is on a par with this representative lyric: "Me, I'm not afraid to be; Me, I'm not afraid to see." Such fatuous wholesomeness is, to put it mildly, somewhat at odds with what seems to be the evening's chief intent: to make a case for androgyny.

The APA Repertory Company

The APA continues to seem to me not so good as its legion of defenders claim, not so bad as its few harsh critics insist. I thought the production of de Ghelderode's *Pantagleize,* for example, frequently striking, especially in its deliberate fusion of historical styles, which succeeded in giving a heavy-handed script more universal applicability than I suspect it innately has (though apparently the APA used a bowdlerized version). I had similar feelings about the *Show-Off*. The play is a dated bit of sentimental realism, without enough invention to warrant its length — though in the construction of one or two scenes, Kelly shows surprising daring in the way he mixes humor and pathos. The APA production, in its careful pacing and attention to detail, made the play look better than it is — as did the strong performances by Jennifer Harmon and Gwyda Donhowe. Helen Hayes's much heralded

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portrayal of the mother was indeed impressive in its technical mastery, though too often a display of technique took precedence over the unfolding of character.

The American Place Theater

Under Wynn Handman's leadership, the APT continues to encourage and produce talent unlikely to find outlets elsewhere. I saw three of its productions this year. Each had its merits, but none reached the level of excellence achieved in past seasons. One of the three — a trilogy of short plays by Ed Bullins — I cannot, in fairness, judge; the first two playlets, despite some germs of originality and a brilliant performance by L. Errol Jaye, impressed me as unsteady in conception and overwrought in execution, but since I had to leave the theater early, I missed the third, *Clara's Old Man,* which I am told is by far the most impressive of the trio.

APT's second production, Ronald Ribman's *The Ceremony of Innocence,* was set on the Isle of Wight in the year 1103 and dealt with the wholly invented (historically speaking) travail of the peaceful king Ethelred, beset and defeated by the war-mongerers surrounding him. The production was marked by a graceful performance in the title role by Donald Madden and some good supporting work by David Birney (who was also impressive this season in *Summertree*). But Arthur A. Seidelman's direction seemed to me misguided; he has a penchant for inventing stage business which is mostly mere busyness and which obscures instead of revealing the script's intentions.

Ronald Ribman has already demonstrated his talents in *Harry, Noon and Night* and *The Journey of the Fifth Horse,* and *Ceremony* confirms his lucid intelligence and his flair for epigrammatic statement. But he has not yet found a personal voice. While searching for it, unfortunately, he has, in *Ceremony,* borrowed the antique form of historical drama without imbuing it with any contemporary perspective (other than the labored thematic one of "peace or war"). Pseudo–Shakespearean declamations like "know this or be damned for a fool" were embarrassing, and periodic anachronisms like Kent, in buddy fashion, putting his hands on the King's shoulders, or Sven of Denmark remonstrating with his daughter to "Be a Dane! Be a Dane!" kept me nervously wondering when the next gaff would come. Still, Ribman is a writer of indisputable talent and hopefully he will yet find a form to embody it.

Robert Lowell's *Endecott and the Red Cross* was in some ways the most disappointing of APT's three productions, not least because the company had triumphed a few seasons back with Lowell's *The Old*

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Glory. There were some splendid production values in *Endecott*: Richard Peaslee's musical score helped to create an appropriately brooding mood; the mad, eclectic costumes by Robert LaVigne suited the ribaldry of Merry Mount perfectly; John Wulp's backdrops were lyrical and mysterious; and Kenneth Haigh's performance as Governor Endecott, nicely captured the essence of a man "pacing in chains through a strange land," that dualistic American, the anguished killer. The success of Haigh's performance was due in part, of course, to Lowell's script. But only in part, for Haigh managed to individualize a role written largely in generalizations. Indeed the play is essentially untheatrical: it talks about action that happens off stage instead of creating action on it. The static, expository nature of the script was underscored by the disastrously slow pacing of John Hancock's direction.

The Repertory Theater of Lincoln Center

Lincoln Center continues on its mediocre way. Banality seems to accompany every gesture — whether in the conventional choice of plays or in the glossy program notes. The Center has itself become an artifact of American culture: glittering surfaces, empty insides. Though this season has shown little variation on the theme, a partial exception was the revival of Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes.* The play itself is of more interest than some reviewers have suggested. Its one-dimensional characterizations can themselves be taken as part of Hellman's design: to dramatize how human greed, the single-minded pursuit of possessions or power, reduces its victims to obsessional husks. Further, the physical splendor of Howard Bay's sets, the muted elegance of Patricia Zipprodt's costumes and some of Mike Nichols' directorial touches (like the elevation of the black servants into a kind of Greek chorus), gave the production some unusual interest. But what the Lord giveth he taketh away. Thanks to Margaret Leighton's "Birdie," who could be identified as a lost soul chiefly because her accent traveled uncertainly between several linguistic worlds, and to Anne Bancroft's cheap characterization of Regina as a kind of undernourished bull-dyke, the production, on balance, was only a partial success.

It should be said for Lincoln Center that at its Forum Theater this season, Ron Cowen, a twenty-two-year-old playwright, made a promising debut with *Summertree.* I'm somewhat bewildered by my reaction to the play. I kept telling myself it was only *Our Town* revisited: the same themes of tender youth, the same tone of borderline sentimentality. But *Summertree* moved me far more than *Our Town* ever had. And I'm not sure why. It may be that Cowen's craftmanship is too subtle for full appreciation at a single viewing. More likely, the play's

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impact owed much to a sensitive production that managed to contain the script's potential treacle while at the same time salvaging its honest emotion. For that feat of balance, the artlessness of David Pressman's direction and the simplicity of the cast's performance must share equal credit.

Landford Wilson's *Untitled Play* at the Judson Memorial Church had elements of real power, due largely to his intriguing insistence on sabotaging his own creations (there is an affinity here with the current vogue of "Destruction Art"). Wilson likes to swiftly dissipate moods which he himself has skillfully built. And he encourages us to mock his talent for language by having the two actors for whom his play is ostensibly performed withhold attention from its verbal portions. In place of consistency of mood and emphasis on language, Wilson prefers (this may owe much to the perspective of the director, Remy Charlip) to draw attention to how the interplay of words, body movement and "materials" can produce quickly shifting states of feeling, the shifts themselves combining into a disturbing blend of elation and fright. I'm not at all sure what Wilson's intentions are (if any) in aiming for such a complex reaction — beyond, that is, producing the reaction itself. But I was tempted to view the string of disparate sensations of youth, energy, violence, despair, innocence, hate and unconcern as an apt metaphor, or emotional equivalent, for that Untitled Play we call the United States. Wilson, though, would probably reject such a self-conscious and rational gloss on his work.

The First Festival of the Radical Theater consisted of performances by five different groups: the Pageant Players, the Open Theatre, the Gut Theatre, the Performance Group and the Bread & Puppet Theatre. The evening was organized as a benefit for the Radical Booking Agency, a nonprofit cooperative set up to arrange engagements for participating members. My suggestion is that potential bookers avoid the Pageant Players, a mime group literal in both theme and technique, and think twice about the Gut Theatre, a group of Puerto Rican and Negro street kids, aged 7-17, who act out, with occasional incoherent charm, their problems and feelings.

On the other hand, Peter Schumann's Bread & Puppet Theatre is an exciting company. It has been putting on shows for six years in New York streets, lofts, backyards and even theaters, and for the "Festival" offered *Johnny Comes Marching Home,* a good sample of its haunting combination of mime, puppeteering, music, voices and lights. It also demonstrated, incidentally, that the theater of political statement need not involve the literal polemics of which it usually consists.

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The final company, Richard Schechner's Performance Group offered *Birth Ritual,* a segment, we are told, of a larger work in progress called *Dionysus in '69* (a version of Euripides' *The Bacchae*).[1] The first section, consisting of rather banal free-form exercises done in the seminude, bored me, and I was reduced to semipornographic reveries about the wondrous scenes that must take place during "body" auditions for the company. Yet when the actual "births" began on stage, I had to offer silent apologies, for the effect was remarkably powerful. It may be that I found the second portion more effective because of the admixture of language, to me still an essential ingredient of theater. Indeed throughout the "Festival" I kept thinking that "Radical Theater" could best be defined not by its political content, but by its insistence on non- or minimal-, verbal interaction — in other words (for one who believes in the centrality of language), anti-theater. In any case, there seems to be a conscious metaphysic behind the Performance Group and a likelihood of it producing some significant departures; a single segment, though, is not enough on which to base an understanding or evaluation of the Group's prospects.

Brief Mention

The new Negro Ensemble Company impressed me most for managing to make Peter Weiss's ponderous *Song of the Lusitanian Bogey* an interesting event. This success was due in part to the acting talents of the company, but even more to the direction of Michael A. Schultz, who sensibly decided that under no circumstances should the script be allowed to stand on its own. Schultz opted for a kind of music/dance spectacle which deliberately distracted attention from Weiss' elephantine prose, engulfing the audience in a masterly charade of choreographed movement, color and sound. This was Schultz's directorial debut in New York and it was a resounding success. . . . An "Informal Evening with the Open Theater," created to raise funds for the troupe's visit to Europe, had some marvelous segments. The company's extraordinarily sensitive ensemble work manages, through physical movement, actually to evoke internal states. Some of the troupe's sketches disappointingly aped current fashions in mixed media, but there was, on the whole, a lovely liberating quality to the evening — I mean for the audience, as well as the actors. . . . Joseph Papp's production of "Hamlet" was a sophomoric bore, nothing more than an unrelated series of gimmicks, sight gags and vulgarisms; once in a while a joke worked — as it does in any evening of vaudeville. . . . Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party*

1 *Dionysus in '69* opened in New York shortly after the Summer *PR* went to press.

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is an early play that shows the signs of an apprentice-at-work. He is not yet the master of "less is more," nor fully in control of the spare, suggestive line, as later in *The Caretaker* or *The Homecoming*. Alan Schneider's direction underscored rather than concealed the script's uncertainties, though the party scene itself was genuinely terrifying and Ruth White's performance as Meg was beautifully detailed. . . . The best single performance of the year was by the 42-year-old English actor Roy Dotrice in his evening-long, solo re-creation of the diarist, John Aubrey. Dotrice's was a mesmerizing portrait of a mischievous, learned, garrulous, dotty, charming 80-year-old, and Julia Trevelyan Oman's set was — the praise could hardly be higher — equal to the occasion. . . . A close second for performing honors goes to John Colicos' eloquent, sly, tempestuous re-creation of Churchill in Hochhuth's overlong, preachy yet occasionally arresting *Soldiers*. . . . Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, as poignant a statement as ever made on how circumstances control men and how war destroys the innocents, was aided by Michael Cacoyannis' vivid inventions and by Irene Papas' deeply felt performance. Yet the production was kept from complete success by some weak links in the supporting cast and by Cacoyannis' own tendency to the self-consciously theatrical gesture. . . . Sam Shepard's *Forensic and the Navigators* is a pastiche of avant-garde clichés. Shepard is in love with free association, with letting one line produce the next. At best this conveys a playful spontaneity: at its much more frequent worst, it becomes just one damn thing after the other. . . . I was impressed by the work of director Allen Garfield at the off-off–Broadway Troupe Theatre Club. In one playlet, Garfield converted the author's stage directions into an actual character, thereby making a subtle statement about the refusal of people to respond to the needs of others — and also not to respond. Garfield is a director to watch. . . . Paul Foster's *Tom Paine* and the production "conceived" for the La Mama Troupe by Tom O'Horgan were of a piece: artifice substituting for mind. There were a few humorous intervals in the script and a few stunning devices in the direction, but the evening failed to make anything close to an interesting statement about revolution or revolutionaries. And so far as I could tell, John Bakos is the only member of the troupe with any conspicuous talent. . . . Wole Soyinka, Africa's most celebrated playwright, who is presently in jail in his native Nigeria, was unlucky in his very first production in the United States, an evening of two short plays, *The Trials of Brother Jero* and *The Strong Breed*. The sets particularly, cluttered and fussy, nullified Soyinka's attempt at large-scale, almost mythic effects in *The Strong Breed*. There were, however, some notable performances: Yvette Hawkins in a small

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role in *Breed* and Harold Scott as the lead in *Jero* — the latter a perfect incarnation of the hustling evangelical: the soft, silken, beautifully articulated voice, the arch, charming, slightly effeminate manner. . . . Rosalyn Drexler's *The Line of Least Existence,* the appeal of which lies in its mannered, quick-fired, Marx Brothers-like poetry, was badly served by a Judson Theatre production which, in its slow pacing and spun-out stage business, worked directly against the script's strengths. . . . Rochelle Owens, Drexler's rival for the unwanted title of Queen of off-off-Broadway, was represented this season by *Istanboul.* It had some amusing moments, and a first-rate creation in the character of St. Mary of Egypt, but was badly marred by the usual failings of cellar theater: frantic self-indulgence and a confusion between fantasy and thought. . . . Despite Broadway's detractors, its production standards, at their best, continue to provide the gauge of excellence against which other theatrical work must be measured. That fact was again driven home this year by Alan Schneider's fine production of Robert Anderson's sentimental (though occasionally moving) *I Never Sang for My Father* and especially by Alan Webb's superb performance as the father. . . . The same high standards were evident in the production of Jay Allen's disjointed though frequently charming adaptation of Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie.* Zoe Caldwell's conception of the central character, though a little broad for my taste, was carried through with admirable control and élan. . . . Broadway showed up far less well in Tennessee Williams' *The Seven Descents of Myrtle.* The self-caricaturing script might well have defeated any director, but it seemed to me that José Quintero failed to get the best out of a talented cast, and dissipated instead of focusing the play's limited tension. . . . Edward Albee's downward hurtle continued unchecked in the slick plotting and banal moralizing of *Everything in the Garden.* It may be, as many critics have reported, that the production of Albee's *Mao-Box-Mao* this season in Buffalo represents a new departure for him; if so, it is overdue. Albee, as of now, no longer has a definable style or audience; his posturing and platitudes have lost him the intellectuals, while his residual iconoclasm makes him too threatening and obscure for the suburbs. . . . Israel Horovitz's *The Indian Wants the Bronx* marks the debut of a playwright closely identified with the city and able to reproduce its special rhythms. Horovitz's considerable strengths include an ability to imagine fresh situations, to toss off some striking lines and to fuse terror and humor. As yet, he is inept at transitions and can be clumsy in his development of narrative and character. His three act play, *Line,* due this fall on Broadway, should tell us more about the range of his talents. . . . The double bill of Sam Shepard's *Red Cross*

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and John Guare's *Muzeeka* was of interest chiefly for the acting of Sam Waterston and Florence Tarlow, and for the nutty suggestiveness of Shepard's script. *Muzeeka,* I'm told, made a strong impression last summer at the Mark Taper Forum in L.A., but in the current production it seems so devoid of interest that its West Coast success can only be ascribed to Edward Parone's direction there. I'm the more ready to credit Parone with that success because this season he directed an evening of eleven short plays entitled *Collision Course,* of which one was mine, and I saw at firsthand how he can make some tame scripts look more important than they are. . . . *The Concept,* an effort by ex-heroin addicts from Daytop to act out their experiences, moved me a great deal less than it did most reviewers; the honesty and appeal of the "actors" could not quite compensate for the self–consciousness that pervaded much of the evening. . . . *Joe Egg* is a good play in the sense and to the degree that a highly original situation and some snappy, offbeat dialogue can make for one. Yet neither the play's central relationship between husband and wife nor the special tensions of living with a spastic child are sufficiently developed to validate the abrupt, melodramatic ending. Moreover, the author's heavy reliance on the tired device of asides to the audience, and his untheatrical insistence on endlessly discussing past events rather than enacting present ones, made for considerable tedium. I thought the performances uniformly good (though I saw Albert Finney's replacement, Donal Donnelly), and was especially taken with Zena Walker's sympathetic performance as the wife.

And now, in somewhat more detail, the two evenings which impressed me most this year.

Al Carmines, In Circles

Al Carmines is associate minister and director of the arts program at Judson Memorial Church. His reputation as a composer (though that designation is too narrow accurately to describe his range of talent) has been steadily growing as the result of his music for *Home Movies, What Happened* and an opera, *Pomegranada. In Circles* seems to me Carmines' best work to date, indeed an achievement of considerable subtlety — for which the director, Lawrence Kornfeld, and a marvelously fey cast (preeminently, Jacque Lynn Colton) deserve a share of credit.

Gertrude Stein's fifty-year-old playlet provides the "book" for *In Circles.* Carmines' attraction to Stein is long-standing: *What Happened,* the Obie winner for 1964, was also based on Stein — and also directed by Kornfeld. The Carmines-Stein collaboration is an almost predestined

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meeting of minds. Both are concerned with reexamining — in order to revitalize — standard modes of communication. Both wish to invest old words with new meanings and to find new words for expressing familiar ideas and feelings.

In Circles consists of ten songs set to Stein's "lyrics." Between musical numbers, the cast of ten improvises talk (within a controlled framework) or moves to the stylized postures created by Kornfeld's semi-choreographed direction. Both the talk and the movement deliberately outrage conventional categories of style — a girl in bangs and pants dress sings "Cut Wood" in throaty Dietrich fashion; a figure garbed à la nineteen-twenties Hollywood asks the audience with anguished intensity: "Can you flower . . . Can you Meet?" (for even silent movie stars can be liberated by attention to the potential meanings of "simple" words). The posturing of the actors combines with the sprightliness of the music to create fresh contexts for fresh investments, so that when Colton hisses out "circles," it epitomizes rejection, and when another pleads that we "have care of a vermilion," that, in turn, becomes the essence of tenderness.

A repeated refrain of the evening is that "we receive messages all the time" — that is, if we are open to them, if we "remain in a circle and do not despair"; Carmines' witty music, no less than his own cheerful presence on stage as actor/piano player, are exactly suited to his optimistic message. All ten performers — and by implication all of us — relate to each other and to their surroundings because they move and talk in unaccustomed ways, discarding conventional and tired patterns.

Periodically, I longed for some of those conventional patterns; learning an unfamiliar language is not an unalloyed pleasure. And that is what *In Circles* is helping us toward. This same intention, of course, marks much current experimentation in theatrical form. But most experimenters, impatient with the way words usually block rather than facilitate communication, are minimizing or discarding the verbal. Carmines, on the other hand, recognizes that language is central to human interaction — and to the theatrical enterprise. Instead of rejecting words he tries to reinvigorate them, clarifying and extending their meaning through music (and Kornfeld, as collaborator, through body movement). This makes Carmines the most human, and the most inherently theatrical, of our current innovators.

The San Francisco Mime Troupe

The S. F. Mime Troupe was formed in 1959 to perform "classical mime" (i.e. Chaplin, not Marceau), a form in which "words sharpen and refine, but the substance of the meaning is in action." This was the

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troupe's point of departure. In 1960, it began concentrating on sixteenth century commedia dell'arte, drawn to its "popular, free, engaging, and adaptable" style. Since then, in a repertory that has included Molière, Machiavelli, Bruno, Brecht and de Ghelderode, the troupe has proven just how free and adaptable an antique form can be.

For its New York engagement, the Troupe presented an adaptation of Goldoni's *L'Amant Militaire.* It was stunning — for me the single most exciting evening of the year. Nor was I disappointed when I went back for a second visit to test my reactions. Like so much else that was best this year on the off-Broadway scene — Lanford Wilson's *Untitled Play,* Al Carmines' *In Circles,* the Bread and Puppet Theater, Michel A. Schulz's production of *The Lusitanian Bogey* — *L'Amant* was infused with a joyous disregard of conventional categories and boundaries (the same attitude, incidentally, which can be seen in the new generation's eclectic choice in clothing, and the New Left's in ideology). Peter Cohon of the S. F. Troupe plays Pantalone, the Mayor of Spinachola, in a broad Brooklyn-Jewish accent. Others interject Southern white or Negro dialect into their sixteenth-century roles with sudden and deliberate irregularity. And twentieth-century allusions are sprinkled at random throughout the script ("I have come to water the flower children"; "As Julius Caesar said to Thom McAn: 'I March' "). Styles, accents, costumes and references hilariously intermingle, turning anachronism into art.

The artificial structure of the commedia form serves as an effective foil for the earthiness of the performance. Stylization of movement and gesture collide with, and by contrast heighten, the explicit obscenities of the script ("that's not my daughter, that's a trampoline"). Occasionally, they are too explicit, teetering on sophomorism (like the lyric "if at home, you beat your meat" to the tune of Irving Berlin's "This is the Army, Mr. Jones"). But because the pacing is swift, with nothing belabored, these lapses are quickly obliterated. They become, in memory, insignificant excesses in an evening of pungent iconoclasm, overwhelming fun.

The actors themselves seem to enjoy the affair as much as the audience — and this is the key to their success. For what they communicate, in essence, are their own attractive personalities. Within the formal structure of *L'Amant Militaire* they are, finally, playing themselves, or rather, not playing at all, but being themselves. And those selves come across as so wonderfully open, humane and authentic, that despite the evening's furious indictments of the United States, I came away full of hope for the country — it has, after all, produced this marvelous new generation.

Martin Duberman

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CONTEMPORARY NONSENSE

"If this country had had so much dissent and legal interference in earlier days, the general [Hershey] maintained, 'the Indians would still be here.' " (*Chicago Sun-Times,* May 15, 1968). Contributed by Norman Gritz, Paris, France.

"WHITES IN MEMPHIS UNSHAKEN BY RIOT"

"MEMPHIS, March 30 — The white leadership in Memphis, which has expressed pride in the city's racial climate for years, appeared largely unshaken in its conviction today despite a costly riot in the downtown area this week.

" 'It's not bad at all,' said Thomas W. Faires, president of the Memphis area Chamber of Commerce. 'If the Negro ministers would tend to their ministering instead of trying to stir things up, we wouldn't have had this trouble. . . .'

"Many Negroes have no background, Mr. Faires said . . . , and often they won't work.

"Also, he continued, the Federal Government has ruined a number of them with a lot of programs."

(*New York Times,* March 31, 1968). Contributed by Jim Cole, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

"COLLEGE PLANS VIETNAM TOWN"

"SAULT STE. MARIE, MICH.—A model Vietnamese village complete with death traps used by the Vietcong against United States soldiers will be built near Lake Superior State College next year as a tourist attraction. Maj. Thomas P. Kaine, chairman of the college's military science department, said that the village would be built by students and members of the local National Guard."

(*New York Times,* January 1, 1968). Contributed by Henry Norr, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

"TV STATION DROPS A SERIES IN RACE"

"DETROIT.—A local television station has canceled prime time showing of a series aimed at broadening racial understanding. The programs will be replaced by reruns of 'The Monkees.' "

(*New York Times,* June 9, 1968). Contributed by Burling Lowrey, Washington, D.C.

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Thomas R. Edwards

THE SOFT MACHINE

Though it's hard to believe that people really read or talk much about Marshall McLuhan these days, he and his critics keep electing him man of the decade. Frank Kermode remarked in 1963 that "in a truly literate society [*The Gutenberg Galaxy*] would start a long debate," but no one has waited for so improbable a millennium; McLuhan goes on writing new books and republishing old ones, but it hardly matters, since the debate about him now seems to have become self-generating. In *McLuhan: Hot & Cool,* an intriguing new olio of things by and about the master, we are assured of his importance by ad men, hip Jesuits, Susan Sontag and various Canadians, assured of his folly by Dwight Macdonald, George P. Elliott, Christopher Ricks and other Urizenic tyrants of typographical law, assured of his mixed value by judicious Centrists like Harold Rosenberg, Jonathan Miller and George Steiner.[1] But no one, least of all McLuhan himself, doubts that he has to be dealt with somehow. What is his fatal fascination? How has a mind that is by any known test slipshod and derivative, a style that so relentlessly cultivates the tasteless and the banal, occupied so much critical space? How can a man who solemnly assures us that "the word parody means a road that goes alongside another road" be trusted with any harder science than Greek etymologies?

It is I think best to assume that *what* McLuhan says is the least important thing about him. McLuhanism is not a message but a medium, a rendering of the uneasy excitement about contemporary culture that grips thoughtful people of a certain age. To my knowledge none of the contributors to *Hot & Cool* is under thirty, and for the people who are

1 Marshall McLuhan: *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (paperback), University of Toronto Press, 1966. $2.25; *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man* (paperback), Beacon Press, 1967. $2.95. Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore: *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects,* Random House, 1967. $10.00; *Keep in Touch,* McGraw-Hill, 1968. $5.95. Marshall McLuhan and Parker Harley: *Through the Vanishing Point,* Harper and Row, 1968. $6.95. *McLuhan: Hot and Cool,* ed. G. E. Stearn, Dial Press, 1967. $4.95.

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creating the new state of things or will have to live longest with it, McLuhan himself is nearly irrelevant. The Lumpen-youth, in whom his prognostics seem best realized, don't read much and don't need him to tell them where they are, while their more clerkly peers, still provisionally interested in print and rational operations, find him superficial and old hat. (For them the electronic culture is also a paperback culture, and they read or at least carry Lévi-Strauss and Fanon, not *Understanding Media.*) McLuhan's audience consists mostly of people like himself, middle-aged souls formed by the literary culture of the twenties and thirties but anxious to feel up to date and touchingly sure that an intelligent reader of Joyce and Eliot can grasp just about anything if he sets his mind to it. There are no essays in *Hot & Cool* by psychologists or communications scientists — the wise, apparently, are saying nothing till they see.

McLuhan is *our* sage, alas. Like us, he can apprehend technical innovation only through analogy. Like us, he can do "research" only by pasting up other people's discoveries. Like us, he wants badly to have a sense of humor, keep cool and witty in the face of seeming nightmare, respond openly to the new without quite yielding to its seductions, remain critically objective without holing up in pedantry and moral fogeyism. His task has been to find a style, an expressive medium for his predicament and ours, and it's his style, in the largest sense, that here concerns me.

He seems most at home in the give-and-take of interview and conversation, where his method of "probing" — saying anything that seems provocative, regardless of contextual relevance or rational substance — works more freely than it can in premeditated print. The most revealing piece in *Hot & Cool* is a transcript of conversations with G. E. Stearn,[2] from which I detach a representative and topical moment:

STEARN: Similarly, you claim that the war in Vietnam is, more or less, a creature of television.

MCLUHAN: Without an informed public there would be no war. We live in an informational environment and war is conducted with information. TV news coverage of Vietnam has been a disaster as far as Washington is concerned because it has alienated people altogether from that war. Newspaper coverage would never alienate people from the war because it's "hot," it doesn't involve. TV does and creates absolute nausea. It's like public hangings — if there were public hangings there would be no hangings. Because

2 Later quotations, if not otherwise identified, are from this interview, first published in *Encounter,* June, 1967.

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> public hangings would *involve* people. The distant statistical fact — "At 5:30 this morning so and so was executed" — that's hot. Washington is still fighting a "hot" war, as it were, by newspaper means and the old technologies. The effects of the new technologies on war coverage is not something Washington is prepared to cope with. In Washington people do not concede that the news on TV and news in the press are dissimilar.
>
> TV has begun to dissolve the fabric of American life. All the assumptions — all the ground rules — based on visuality, superficiality, blueprinting, connectedness, equality, sameness — disappear with TV.

STEARN: If you shut off TV, then we would end the war in Vietnam and at the same time set back the civil rights movement?

MCLUHAN: Oh yes. But there is an alternative: Put hundreds of extra lines on the TV image, step up its visual intensity to a new hot level. This might serve to reverse the whole effect of TV. It might make the TV image photographic, slick, like movies: hot and detached. . . .

Now it isn't one's conditioning by print culture that creates this air of affable nuttiness. You could print these remarks, hear them sung by the Fugs, watch them dance in a TV cartoon or see them spelled out on the Astrodome scoreboard, and they still would conjure up the dense cross-purposes of Absurdist comedy. It plays into McLuhan's hand to get angry about such talk, but its dramatistic qualities are worth examining.

Here the character named "McLuhan" (clearly the star part) has a number of voices and roles at his disposal. He can be numbingly platitudinous ("TV has begun to dissolve the fabric of American life"), vocally just a halftone from the Sunday-supplement moralizer's determination to rescue us from life as it is. But this voice has a way of going a little askew, as a surprise term galvanizes the cliché with a twitch of pseudo-life — "without an informed public there would be no *war*" is like an unexpected gift you don't quite know how to accept. Another voice delights in the offhand analogy that proves exactly what it doesn't want to, like the remark about hangings. Public hangings did indeed "involve people," but as Boswell's case reminds us, those people — the avid spectators and the pitifully histrionic victims — were involved in a way that made hangings seem as necessary to popular health as prostitution and cheap gin. (We achieve the present hope of at last dispensing with legal murder only after decades of secluding executions from the public theater, making them impersonal, routine, *boring* acts of sanitary engineering.) But this character rushes disarmingly past his

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own muddle, leaving you helplessly confused about the intended point, though curious to know his view of lynchings.

"Point" is of course a visual metaphor, and McLuhan will have none of it. Stearn seems to think they're talking about how television reporting perpetuates the war, but McLuhan, while blandly nodding his head, clearly doesn't think the idea important or, for the moment, even true. He thinks TV "a disaster as far as Washington is concerned" because it involves people, creates absolute nausea, and so on. Fine, reasonable, comforting — but *this* proves the war would end if TV were shut off? No, it proves just the contrary: without TV the war could go its way in the uninvolving newspapers, without popular opposition to "Washington" and its bloody business. McLuhan's "Oh yes" is priceless — Stearn and the innocent reader can happily suppose he means what they hope he means, but *he* is only probing, spinning out his theory of *media,* not contemplating war or psychological fact. If Stearn wants to think that "connectedness, equality, sameness," refers to the civil rights movement, McLuhan has no objection; if Stearn is teasing him into saying something really outrageous, he is happy to oblige. But of course these words have nothing to do with civil rights. They're "technical" labels for perceptual assumptions, sense-ratios, but the misunderstanding doesn't matter so long as he can get in the clincher, the scrap of data ("hundreds of extra lines on the TV image") that proves he still knows what's what down at Bell Labs and still can dream anything into the grand design.

Yet it seems a little ungrateful to inquire too deeply into *what* such an entertaining voice is saying. McLuhan and his school are fallible analysts of intellectual history, as Anthony Quinton and (discussing Father Ong's *Presence of the Word*) Mr. Kermode formidably show in recent issues of the *New York Review*; his accounts of the present environment are suggestive but often wildly ill-considered; his projections of the electronic future are perhaps as crankish as his history. (To overlook in 1951 the coming of television, as he now admits he did in writing *The Mechanical Bride,* doesn't argue limitless prophetic powers, and his present reluctance to relate his theories to the conditions of drug-culture suggests he may be missing another boat.) One may agree with his main premises, which are mostly old friends anyway — yes, experience is metaphorical, forms of information are more potent than "content," our collective idea of reality does undergo large transformations as we live into new technologies — without thinking his the indispensable guidebook to the new disorder. But his style does reveal how the irritations and amusements of the present scene work on a mind formed by other environments. McLuhan stands for us, not least in

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acting out so many of our worst habits, and I want to launch some probes of my own into his literary presence and what it expresses.

A man's life is his own business, and I would not presume to intrude upon McLuhan's private self. But the "Marshall McLuhan" presented in the writings and talkings is a public figure and, like any public figure, in large part a deliberate fictional contrivance. *This* McLuhan is only too anxious to sever his present identity from the private biography, as he once told Eric Goldman:

> GOLDMAN: Here you are the son of Baptist parents, convert to Catholicism, a Canadian student of English literature, formerly an engineering student and now. . . .
> MCLUHAN: Oh, don't bother about that data.
> GOLDMAN: Why?
> MCLUHAN: It's all wrong! And, in any case, quite unnecessary.

Despite the disclaimer, it is a history of large conversions, from inherited Protestantism to Catholicism, from engineering to literature to some original synthesis of the two, from provincial Canadian (born in Alberta, educated in Manitoba) to New York academic entrepreneur and world mastermind, from M.A. thesis on "George Meredith as a Poet and Dramatic Parodist" to *Family Circle* piece on "What TV Is Really Doing to Your Child" (the first and last entries in the hefty *Hot & Cool* bibliography), from Herbert Marshall McLuhan to just plain Marshall. For him this is "all wrong" or at least "quite unnecessary" to understanding how he lives now, but I'm not so sure.

While growing up in Buffalo, New York, I encountered a malicious myth about Canadians that may have been current in other border towns too. You learned to watch for cars with Ontario licenses so as to enjoy (you hoped) a glorious show of heedless, befuddled driving. Canadians, so the theory went, were mostly poor rubes, barred from civilizing influences by puritanical liquor laws and iron-jawed, incorruptible policemen — called "the Provincials" and rightly feared — quite unlike the raffish, all too human Irishmen and Germans and Poles who kept Buffalo only as lawful as was in its nature to be. Thus the Canadians came over for a good time and, it being amply available, were dazzled into excesses fatal to what reason and mechanical competence they had to start with. Like the myth of American contempt for foreigners, this one had some basis in truth.

Now for all I know, McLuhan may be an expert driver and a teetotaler; certainly he can't have much else in common with the desperate cutups from Port Colborne and St. Catherines and Crystal Beach who careen through my half-imaginary memories. But in their ways he and they may have shared a sense of what a complex fate it is to be

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a Canadian in the shadow of the Image of Liberty that once was America if you didn't happen to live in it yourself. Certainly McLuhan's view of Canada contains both affection and condescension:

> *Explorations* became an international magazine because it had something to say to the world, something new. It excited a lot of people. The idea that one could run something of real international interest and excitement in a backward place like Canada charmed them. Canadians are all a very humble bunch. They take it for granted that everything they do must be second rate. Carpenter and I just blithely assumed that, since nearly everything in the world is second rate at best, there was no reason why we couldn't do something that was first rate here. So it happened.

This depends on believing both that Canada really is backward, so that *Explorations* seems all the more remarkable coming from *there,* and that its backwardness is only an illusion of parochial self-doubt, since after all the magazine did happen in Canada and nowhere else. You accept "international" standards even as you insist that most things are second-rate everywhere. Where a boy from Sioux City might dream of saying something to America, a boy from Edmonton must have "something to say to the world."[3]

The transmutation of Canada into the great globe itself may be a mythic motif in McLuhanism. His fascination, approving or not, with "tribalism," the idea of the world as "global village" all electrically wired up to itself, seems a natural interest for a mind shaped by physical and cultural solitude. As in western American writers, you expect both a yearning for and a "country" hostility to the great world of city culture; but for a Canadian, I suppose, that world isn't Montreal or Toronto, themselves tainted with the national sense of inferiority, but New York, Washington, imperial America as the pattern of provincial desire and the awful proof of where that desire leads in the end. Certainly McLuhan's modern world is preeminently America, the land where media rule, where print culture was the only one achieved before the great plug-in came. He tells Stearn that "ear cultures" still exist in Russia, all backward or semiliterate societies (his examples are China and Ghana), Eskimo regions, "the Negro world," Castro's Cuba, the American South and (breathtakingly) England, though "the British are unaware of their auditory culture." Not much left. For "western

3 Stearn tells us in *Hot & Cool* that McLuhan's elocutionist mother was known as "the Ruth Draper of Canada," which might have seemed to carry the cruel implication that there was *another* Ruth Draper, the real one, for the rest of the world?

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visual man" read citified American man before his electric resurrection, and for "oral-aural man" read all those political and cultural enemies (except the Eskimos?) who confront him at home and abroad. The subliminal bias isn't of course an expression of political or social doctrine — McLuhan doesn't much care whether it's the Negro world or the Klan that makes us sweat, just so long as we do so.

His ambivalence toward electric civilization seems quite genuine. It is the perfection of human interinvolvement, the abolition of open spaces and prairie silences, linear horizons and straight roads leading nowhere much; but it is also the hideous epitome of everything contemptible about an Americanized world, the cellophane and plastic brothel McLuhan icily visited in *The Mechanical Bride*. Electric America is where you want to go, and where you despise yourself for being. McLuhan sings the new environment by stressing just those qualities that, he well knows, will most distress those who cling to the old sense-ratios, and there is surely a touch of self-punishment in this:

> There is more diversity, less conformity under a single roof in any family than there is with the thousands of families in the same city. The more you create village conditions, the more discontinuity and division and diversity. The global village absolutely insures maximal disagreement on all points. It never occurred to me that uniformity and tranquillity were the properties of the global village. It has more spite and envy. The spaces and times are pulled out from between people. A world in which people encounter each other in depth all the time.
>
> The tribal-global village is far more divisive — full of fighting — than any nationalism ever was. Village is fission, not fusion, in depth. People leave small towns to *avoid* involvement. The big city *lined* [lured?] them with its uniformity and impersonal milieu. They sought propriety and in the city, money is made by uniformity and repeatability. Where you have craftsmanlike diversity, you make art, not money. The village is not the place to find ideal peace and harmony. Exact opposite. Nationalism came out of print and provided an extraordinary relief from global village conditions. I don't *approve* of the global village. I say we live in it.

Whatever the remarks about money and art may mean, the last sentences are clear enough. "We" must signify "we urbanized Americans," as opposed to the Russians and Ghanians and Alabamans who remain oral-aural, exempted from our fall into typographic individualism and thus spared the painful heat of our reentry, so to speak, into a tribal atmosphere that is all the more dangerous to those who have once left it.

But of course there's a more hopeful version of Global Village. In *Understanding Media* and *The Medium is the Massage* the tone is

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considerably less cautionary, and a strangely tentative moment may suggest why:

> One of the consequences of electronic environments is the total involvement of people in people. . . .
>
> Here perhaps my own religious faith has some bearing. I think of human charity as a total responsibility of all, for all. Therefore, my energies are directed at far more than mere political or democratic intent. Democracy as a by-product of certain technologies, like literacy and mechanical industry, is not something that I would take very seriously. But democracy as it belongs very profoundly with Christianity is something I take very seriously indeed.
>
> There have been many more religious men than I who have not made even the most faltering steps in this direction. Once I began to move in this direction, I began to see that it had profound religious meaning. I do not think it my job to point this out. For example, the Christian concept of the mystical body — all men as members of the body of Christ — this becomes technologically a fact under electronic conditions. However, I would not try to theologize on the basis of my understanding of technology. I don't have a background in scholastic thought, never having been raised in any Catholic institution. Indeed, I have been bitterly reproached by my Catholic confrères for my lack of scholastic terminology and concepts.

This dismissal of political democracy as historical by-product smacks of the *National Review* brand of Catholic conservatism — typographical America figures as the old liberal state, with its concerns for those political and social definitions of human reality that Benjamin DeMott and Harold Rosenberg wish McLuhan could take more seriously. If the global village is the mystical body of Christ, then its tensions and animosities are only necessary ephemera, strains of discordance that must be *felt,* however painfully, if one is ever to make out the ultimate harmony; order is not linear regularity but the simultaneous presence and relation of unlike things, as in old images of the divine economy. Remembering the fate of Titus Oates, I stop short of charging that McLuhan is engaged with Father Ong, Hugh Kenner and the Fordham School of Communications in some sinister Popish Plot against secular consciousness. But his Catholicism does structure his more hopeful moods, as DeMott suggests in twitting him for setting up as "the constituted pardoner of this age — a purveyor of perfect absolution for every genuine kind of modern guilt."

It may be that the age can use a few pardoners, people who both recognize its guilts and preserve enough intellectual detachment to deal with them sanely. I am not inevitably outraged by someone who wants

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to cheer me up. But McLuhan's claim that he preaches such detachment is a little confusing:

> In his amusement born of rational detachment of [sic] his own situation, Poe's mariner in "The Descent into the Maelstrom" staved off disaster by understanding the action of the whirlpool. His insight offers a possible stratagem for understanding our predicament, our electrically-configured whirl.
>
> (*The Medium is the Massage,* p. 150)

It's a favorite allusion, here dubbed in from the preface to *The Mechanical Bride.*[4] But the present availability of such detachment is firmly denied elsewhere in *The Medium is the Massage* (pp. 50-53):

> Like easel painting, the printed book added much to the new cult of individualism. The private, fixed point of view became possible and literacy conferred the power of detachment, non-involvement. . . .
>
> The Renaissance Legacy.
>
> The Vanishing Point = Self-Effacement.
> The Detached Observer.
> No Involvement!
>
> The viewer of Renaissance art is systematically placed outside the frame of experience. . . .
>
> The instantaneous world of electric informational media involves all of us, all at once. No detachment or frame is possible.

We are to understand our predicament by doing what that predicament makes impossible, cultivating a "rational detachment" from the electric environment that was created by and can be sustained only in perspective-print environments. Detachment is the bad thing that lured oral–scribal man out of his medieval garden, yet it's what any man will cultivate in the midst of bewildering cultural revolution. McLuhan the historical mapmaker is all Catholic and anti-individualist, yet he reaches for a strangely Protestant self-regulation when he contemplates himself *living,* as a man, under the new dispensation.

4 With a few interesting changes. The subliterate "detachment of his own situation" results from a revisionary elision: "rational detachment *as a spectator* of his own situation" is the original reading, but the new electric metaphor can accomodate no *spectators.* The *Bride* text says that the sailor "saved himself," but in the darker mood of later McLuhan this becomes "staved off disaster"; and "by understanding" was first "by *studying* the action of the whirlpool and *by cooperating with it,*" faithful to Poe but maybe a bit too active and self-assertive to fit the electric experience?

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The cast of McLuhan's mind, with its provincial cheekiness to the official culture it seeks to capture and its yearning for older, authoritarian models of belief, thus has much in common with those reactionary rebels — Joyce, Eliot, Pound, Wyndham Lewis — he so often invokes as intellectual patrons:

> Years ago, before I wrote the *Bride,* I had a moralistic approach to all environmental facts. I abominated machinery, cities, everything except the most Rousseauistic. Gradually, I became aware of how useless this was and I discovered that artists of the twentieth-century had a different approach and I adopted it.

It's his pleasantly old-fashioned idea of himself as artist, no doubt, that makes necessary his "metaphysical" style, the lapses of mere grammar and logic, the addiction to cute, gymnastic analogies, the discontent with clarity and consistency of topic. He finds his justification in such things as Cubism, Heisenbergian indeterminacy, *Finnegans Wake,* Toynbee, and these slightly dated excitements may seem a little out of phase with the evidence rather perfunctorily adduced from Burroughs, Jack Paar, the Beatles, *New Yorker* cartoons or Op Art. Though he tries to keep up, he remains oddly out of it, involved with what's happening only insofar as it confirms what was predicted by the happenings of his own youth, forty years back. He admits he loathes *watching* TV, and nothing he says about (for example) Pop Music or the new film reflects much personal pleasure. His idea of fun — not one I can afford to ridicule — is surely sitting down with a good book, preferably not brand-new.

Thus I think it an error to accuse him of wanting to embrace the modern world in all its hideous charm. Rather I see him as a Secret Square, a grim figure something like Stephen Dedalus at Bella Cohen's, ill at ease with the scene except as it confirms his worst expectations and punishes his lingering nostalgia for older and seemlier ways. The trouble isn't that McLuhan exults in the electric environment but that, in his determination to make it *really* new, he conjures up a monstrosity he can take no pleasure in at all. If he opens doors to chaos, as Jonathan Miller worries, he seems no readier than anyone else his age to live with chaos comfortably. He *hopes* that the global village may be the mystical body, but the Baptist keeps stirring around inside:

> Until writing was invented, man lived in acoustic space: boundless, directionless, horizonless, in the dark of the mind, in the world of emotion, by primordial intuition, by terror. Speech is a social chart of this bog. (*The Medium is the Massage,* p. 48)

This is the vision of *Finnegans Wake,* but without Joyce's unquenchable delight in the power of bog-life to rejuvenate the linguistic imagination.

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Maybe McLuhan is trying to scare Dwight Macdonald here, but I suspect that a mind so quick to associate emotion with darkness and terror is already scared itself and needs some company. In short, I believe him both when he seems to welcome the new environment and when he protests that he doesn't welcome it in the least.

He's at his worst when he plays the sage, pronouncing organized conceptual plenitude upon a world that would otherwise be unbearable in its randomness, a Virgil in search of other Dantes than just himself. But if we would locate our infernal regions elsewhere, in just that consciousness of personal and collective failure he so insistently excludes from his scheme, we might do well, in dismissing his pretensions, not to dismiss the phenomena he calls to our attention. He himself, in his literary presence, is a modern phenomenon, and a particularly pleasant one. He's not a serious man — indeed it's one of his virtues that in some moods he would take this as a compliment, as I mean it to be. Rather he's a modern type of the Enthusiast, the man who (like some Swiftian Projector) has found the right "approach" at last and wants very badly to share his great secret with the world. He loves the sound of words like *absolutely, totally, perfect, exact, entire, complete,* as well as ones like *Fantastic, amazing, tremendous*; and we all know that voice and have felt inner dismay as it approaches across the noisy room, grips our elbow and solves the universe before our eyes. If the solutions change from moment to moment, that is only because the problems do too, and there are possibilities of delight as well as dismay in the spectacle of perpetual mental motion and an amiable indifference to one's own comic value. It would be miraculous if a "surround" as fragmented, discontinuous, irrational as he says ours is *could* be adequately explicated by a mind so infatuated with historical patterns and universal correspondences, and so innocently committed to instrumental solutions. But the McLuhan style, with its suprarational agility, its hunger to know just enough about everything to escape ever having to shut up, its saving power to forget what it just said, does in a funny way convey the feel of experience nowadays and demonstrate some of the skills it takes to keep going.

Indignation or horror is not the best response to McLuhan. He once dismissed hostile critics by observing that "many people would rather be villains than nitwits," and one suspects that he quite enjoys the lurid roles he's so often cast in; but his own literary presence is hardly that menacing. He would be at home in a Dickens novel or a play of Shaw's, and there you would never mistake him for a *villain.*

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JUNE 6, 1968

It has been said that outstanding individuals die but mankind, civilization, the nation, all go on. Yet the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy is frightening in its implications about the state of the country.

Robert F. Kennedy was not a political saint, nor did he embody the more radical ideas of the future that sustain so many people—like myself. (Neither does Senator McCarthy.) But in a sense larger than the specific records and personalities of these two men, together they offered some hope of a new politics, perhaps of a new national style, by galvanizing those Americans, especially among the young, who are tired of the old crap. Senator Kennedy particularly seemed to supply the power we ourselves lacked.

There are many stirring movements of dissent and of intellectual renewal here and abroad. But there is none strong or intelligent enough to become more than an expression of protest, none one could support all the way. In this situation, Senator Kennedy — and Senator McCarthy — may be said to have represented a heroic effort to work for a new world within the confines of the old one. Thus he became a symbol of the legitimacy of dissent.

There are too many facile generalizations about the spread of violence, which do not say anything about specific questions, and hence are easily absorbed into an empty and dangerous rhetoric about law and order, mouthed by people who would do little or nothing about the problems tearing the country apart. As usual, this plays into the hands of the more backward, the more repressive, the more demagogic currents and figures.

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At the same time, there is something awful, and ominous, about the assassination of so many public men in this country whose charisma was a charisma of change. It almost looks as though some perverse historical forces were conspiring to polarize the country by removing those addressing themselves to some of its real problems. It is true that in each case only one, or, at most, several people were implicated. In a strictly logical sense, the whole nation has not been directly involved; and those who argue that it is all the work of a few nuts are technically right. But this is just a legalistic kind of logic and is being fed us by people who want to prove that there is nothing basically wrong, to lull us back into the past.

The one thing we do not need now is more rhetoric. Yet even the death of Senator Kennedy is being used to escalate the production of words, creating a sea of confusion and dissolving people's fears and doubts into the homilies of the status quo. All the political pieties Senator Kennedy stood against in his life are being invoked to memorialize his death.

Who knows what's coming?

William Phillips

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BOOKS

SPACE ODYSSEY

DEATH KIT. By Susan Sontag. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $5.75.

At one point in *Death Kit* Diddy, who is both the center and circumference of consciousness of the book, finds himself in an elevator inside the building which comprises the headquarters of the firm he works for. The architecture of this building is marked by a particular eccentricity — a blue and gold dome. In Victorian times this dome was the top of a chapel, but the chapel has been cleared away and the space is now used for "research and technological development." So "the dome was (now) just a head missing a body, an idle, spiritually pretentious ornament atop a busy profane building. . . . The wrong head for this body." Diddy is drawn to the dome. "Diddy wishes the elevator could go straight up, into the dome. And nestle there." He would leave the elevator and then somehow shut all the others out of the dome. He thinks of possible ways: "any of these situations would do, as long as he can gain the dome by himself." Later on Diddy again thinks of that dome. "Diddy appreciated the fantasy the dome embodies." The dome is fairly obviously human consciousness, once religiously wedded to the actions of the body but now something of a functionless anachronism in this modern mechanical age. For the detached Diddy, this dome offers the ultimate refuge; and the novel concerns the fantasies that are possible, and only possible, in this retreat. This journey into interior space is made clear throughout, a journey undertaken because exterior space, and all that is contained in it, seems either alien or hostile to Diddy — "too agitated to entrust himself to the open spaces of the city streets, with their possibilities of haphazard, impersonal encounters." Even the various small man-made spaces he finds himself in — a railway carriage, a hotel room, a hospital ward, an elevator, a TV studio, etc. — are claustrophobic without being comforting: "however small the space Diddy means to keep free for himself, it won't remain safe." The outside world is "running down"— another of those entropic nightmares common in contemporary Amer-

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ican fiction. There is only one place left to go. "He will have to go further into himself, away from all coherent rational spaces." The route is signposted at regular intervals. "Diddy, inside himself. Which for Diddy, doesn't necessarily mean being in his body. In his mind, then?" There it is he wants to nestle, perchance to dream, perchance finally to find the release of dreamless sleep. Readers of this late review will not need much reminding of the narrative details of the novel — Diddy's abandoning of a train to explore a dark tunnel where he thinks he kills (or Didn't he?) a sinister workman on the tracks (who, I think, first saw the light of day in *Anna Karenina*); his deteriorating relationship with the blind girl Hester; the return to the tunnel to reenact his murder and their lovemaking; and Diddy's final exploration of the chambers of death to which the tunnel leads. In *The Benefactor* the narrator says "I am crawling through the tunnel of myself," and *Death Kit* is just such another long dark crawl. Again, there is much talk of a shell which Diddy dreams he throws from the train window. In the dream he leaves the train to look for it. At first he cannot find it, then he realizes that "It's because he's already inside it (now). The discarded shell, no longer small, is as vast and capacious as the tunnel. Tunnel and shell can substitute for each other, so Diddy can wander in either as he sees fit." Shortly before the end he feels like a sea creature rising "out of its shell" (I was reminded of Holmes's "Chambered Nautilus"), and in those fantastic rooms full of dead bodies through which he wanders, he sees "skulls like shells." Another phrase from *The Benefactor* seems apt here: it describes a woman "alone in the crammed shell of herself." As we watch Diddy crawling, or sinking, deeper and deeper into the dome/tunnel/shell, venturing less and less into the world, declining into lassitude, sickness and inertia, we may recall Miss Sontag's praise for "Beckett's delicate dramas of the withdrawn consciousness — pared down to essentials, cut off, often represented as physically immobilized." ("Didi" is, of course, the nickname of Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*). Again from *The Benefactor*: "If I cannot be outside myself, I will be inside." (Since she seems to have read everything written this century, I wonder if Miss Sontag was influenced by Canetti's rather nightmarish book *Auto da Fé,* with its programmatic schematization — "A Head without a World; Headless World; The World in the Head.")

From one point of view Miss Sontag's books are about how the head gets rid of the world. Whether this is diagnosed as something deplorable, or prescribed as something desirable, is left equivocal to say the least. But the energies of disburdenment — or the fatigues of relinquishment — are very evident in both her novels. The rather tiresome narrator of *The Benefactor* speaks of achieving individuality

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"through dissolution, unravelling, interment" (he is French, and given to cleverness); he too dreams of finding himself in ever smaller spaces, and his attitude is that "the advent of anything brings with it mainly the problem of its disburdenment." He aspires to "weightlessness"; he likes best "a well-cleared landscape"; and he intends "to live out to the fullest the meaning of privacy" — a privacy, surely, which few people would be tempted to disturb. Diddy, suffering a more recognizably American nausea, envies that continuous oblivion to the world (hence its negation) involved in blindness. "How fine that would be. Simply not to see. Garbage trucks, bums, neon signs, gutters, plastic toys, parking lots, unhappy children, Automats, old women on the benches of the traffic islands on upper Broadway." The problematics of vision are much to the fore in this novel and there is a lot of intricate and interesting play with eyes, lamps, torches, TV screens, microscopes, glasses and so on; and the alienating effect of being at once condemned to see but frightened to touch, is explored in a sensitive way which is particularly relevant for contemporary American fiction. But finally, Diddy discovers, or decides, that the "tunnel" is "essentially, unilluminable." Diddy abandons perception, just as he withdraws from communication; he loses weight as he loses world. His last words as he moves naked down the tunnel are "There is another world but it is inside this one." Soon he is among corpses. On the threshold he even arrives at a final formula. "Life = the world. Death = being completely inside one's own head." But this burst of clarity is, in a way, symptomatic of what I find unsatisfying about the novel, which from first to last is extremely formulaic. Miss Sontag would doubtless deplore and despise the fumbling "hermeneutics" of the preceding paragraphs, but it seems to me that her novel sets out to "mean" a very great deal. It is very much *about* "a hopeless, bumbling tourist in the somber labyrinth of his own consciousness." It contains many ideas concerning the problems of identity and relationships, but no people — only diagrams of dispositions, schemas of attitudes. It explores many interesting aspects of contemporary phenomenology and communications *media,* but at the level of theory. The idea behind the book is more interesting than the book itself, which is generalized to the point at which the novel starts to turn into something else. One example: when Diddy thinks about "the world. Which is partitioned off with walls, made of wood and brick and stone and cement; which is stocked with sharp pointed objects that cut the flesh; which is charged with dead looks and inhumane caresses that bruise the spirit." Certainly; but such summarizing deadens the novel which (it seems to me) thrives on specificity. We need the details of those sharp objects, the circumstances of those inhumane caresses. I am

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saying that Miss Sontag conveys little sense of *process*. She is capable of making all sorts of arresting clarifications concerning the torments of consciousness when it becomes disablingly aware of its separation from the general "otherness" of environment; but she cannot, or does not, dramatize, the engagement, the interpretation of consciousness and otherness which customarily provides the richness and energy of the novel. Her book is a long rumination — but it is a rumination without a view.

But if one complains that the novel is airless, viewless, unlocated and entirely adrift in time, Miss Sontag has one powerful rejoinder. Because, as one realizes by the last page (if one has not picked up the hints throughout the novel), the book is simply about the long moment of dying. There are, in truth, no external events — only the compressed fantasies of the last moments of Diddy's fading consciousness, a purely private narrative based on the transformed circumstances of his own suicide (e.g., the bad smell which occurs once or twice is the smell of his own vomit. At one point he has a series of bottles of red wine — blood transfusions?). In view of all this Miss Sontag might fairly say that such an account is perforce airless, viewless, etc., etc., because that suits the quality of the strange dreams thrown up by the final efflorescence of consciousness before it gives up the struggle and enters into that part of the dark tunnel from which there is no return. The repetition of the word "(now)" may be justified as serving to annul our habitual sense of chronological time, since in dreams there is no sense of temporal progression — only "now": "dreams taught me the secret of perpetual presentness," says the narrator of *The Benefactor*, and I need hardly remind any readers how preoccupied American writers have been, at least since Emerson, with "the strong present tense." This fictional device of revealing on the last page that the whole novel — with its illusory externality — is the projection of a man's dying seconds has been used before by William Golding in his immensely powerful novel, *Pincher Martin*. I find that novel more compelling than *Death Kit* because it brings into focus one particular kind of man; it relates the actual appetites of his life to the fantasied stratagems of his death, and the last desperate motions and energies of this particular human consciousness are projected with a seamless force which Miss Sontag's more meditative and notional novel cannot emulate. To adopt two of her own chosen terms, her work is palpably "constructed" rather than "secreted."

In her own often brilliant criticism Miss Sontag says that a proper experience of art is "an experience of the qualities or forms of human consciousness." Art offers "the nourishment of consciousness": "the overcoming or transcending of the world in art is also a way of encountering the

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world," she says and, rightly in my opinion, she sees no limit to the number of different modes of encountering the world we can enjoy and be nourished by: "as the human will is capable of an indefinite number of stances, there are an indefinite number of possible styles for works of art." All this is admirably said, and is in the tradition of that great panegyrist of consciousness, William James: "We see that the mind is at every stage a theater of simultaneous possibilities. Consciousness consists in the comparison of these with each other, the selection of some, and the suppression of the rest by the reinforcing and inhibiting agency of attention. . . . The mind, in short, works on the data it receives very much as a sculptor works on his block of stone. . . . Other sculptors, other statues from the same stone! Other minds, other worlds from the same monotonous and inexpressive chaos [*The Principles of Psychology*]." To appreciate some of those "other worlds" which artists give us, is to expedite the exfoliation and energizing of our own consciousness. But Miss Sontag also says: "the work of art itself is also a vibrant, magical, and exemplary object which returns us to the world in some way more open and enriched." Again, I agree. But I couldn't find the "magic" in her novel. Let me give one example of what I think is part of the problem. If a novel is to have magic it has got to be in the words (or between them). Now in *Death Kit* there is evident a sort of revulsion against language itself. Words and talk in the book are variously described as "sticky as taffy or tough like overchewed bubble gum"; "like cold greasy coffee"; "as physical and inexpressive as the mashed potatoes on Thursday night or the oatmeal for Monday, Wednesday, and Friday breakfasts"; words start to "thicken"; there is a "sticky strip of words," a "tray of words" and a general feeling for their unnourishing nastiness. This feeling is scarcely checked by the blank assertion — "Language is sacred." Sacred, perhaps, until people start to use it or speak it, when it becomes so much slop in the mouth. Now, it is entirely possible that Miss Sontag intended this effect very deliberately. Diddy's sense of the nasty taste of words may be a translation into the terms of fantasy of the brute fact that he is vomiting from, as it were, page 6 to page 312. This would be a rather clever effect (like Pincher Martin turning his aching tooth into a rock), but somehow this nausea of communication seems to infect the whole book, and the language as whole is not really very "vibrant, magical" — or enriching. It *states,* rather than creates.

What I found most interesting and impressive about this book is its pursuit of some of the ultimate implications of that cultivation of "inner spaciousness" celebrated so splendidly by many of the great American writers. Make your mind like the dome of St. Peter's, says

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Melville, and his work indeed testifies to a veritable cathedral of consciousness. But more recent writers have revealed a sharp contraction in the dimensions of the architecture of consciousness. The hero of Walker Percy's *Last Gentleman,* for instance, (who lives mainly through his telescope), finds his ideal domicile in a small truck with a plexiglass roof, "mobile yet at home . . . in the world yet not of the world"; the isolated hero of William Gass's *In the Heart of the Heart of the Country,* ("living at last in my eyes"), is cooped up in a very small house indeed; and now Susan Sontag's Diddy, (purveyor of microscopes), explores what happens when you withdraw into the furthest reaches of inner space. At one point (perhaps when he is making a bid for recovery), he thinks he will "try to view the world more generously. Not only as an arena of contamination, but also as a space to be continually reinvented and reexamined." But as often in American literature, the world is intractable, closing in like the walls on Poe's prisoner. Diddy "thinking . . . to etch his benign fantasy upon it. (Now) finds the world closing in on him, untransformed and unequivocally menacing." Under the circumstances it seems that the only way left is to draw further and further away from the world, into the shell and down the tunnel of self. And what Miss Sontag does show, and it makes her book an important and significant one, is that in the inmost center of the house of consciousness is to be found "the house of death." The "stately mansions" have given way to the morgue, and it is in the morgue, interestingly enough, that Miss Sontag's imagination shows most signs of life. I don't suppose she would approve of my finding a moral in her book, but I think there is one, and one of some moment for American writing of our day. Namely — what shall it profit a man if he shall gain his head, and lose the whole world?

Tony Tanner

NAKED CITY

THE MYTH OF THE MACHINE. By Lewis Mumford. Harcourt, Brace and World. $8.95.
THE RADIANT CITY. By Le Corbusier (translated by Pamela Knight, Eleanor Levieux and Derek Coltman.) Orion Press. $22.50.
THE LEVITTOWNERS. By Herbert J. Gans. Pantheon. $7.95.

After World War II, the American city passed from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom. The result has been a social and aesthetic disaster.

Up until 1945, urban form, taken in the broadest sense of the term,

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followed economic function. The city was located on a river wherever that was possible, thus providing a cheap mode of transportation. The factories and the railroad yard spread out from the water's edge and were surrounded by working-class housing. There was a white-collar downtown of department stores and office buildings, but every night the middle class commuted out to the edge of the city or to the suburbs. In the classic, New England version of this scheme the nearby hilltops were reserved for the rich.

In a brilliant and prophetic essay published in 1896, Lewis Sullivan made the economic and technical basis of the city's design quite explicit. The tall office building, he said, "has come in answer to a call, for in it a new grouping of social conditions has found a habitation and a name." Growing population and congestion, the development of the elevator, the structural capacities of steel and the expansion of business all conspired to force the architects up into the air. There was, of course, enormous room for stylistic variations within these determinations. Sullivan himself fought to liberate the soaring functionalism of the skyscraper from the gimcracky facades of the day. He wanted his art to be candid about the necessities which it incarnated.

After World War II, the old inevitabilities no longer applied. The new technology was housed in long, single story plants which required open space; the new products, particularly in electronics, often had high value at low weight and, in any case, the new transportation system made access to the river and railroad less important; and the new labor force was more and more educated and infected with the suburban yearnings of the middle class. So it became possible to redesign the metropolitan landscape with more freedom than industrial man had ever known.

This is not to say that the evolution of the city now took place without relationship to economic factors. Far from it. The well-off suburbs were federally subsidized and the impoverished central cities were allowed to rot precisely because the priorities of governmental programs were determined by the needs of the corporate sector. What was unprecedented was that this subservience to private power was no longer being accomplished through the "normal" workings of the market. It was now the result of conscious political decisions. As a consequence of choices made in Washington, poverty was rendered more tenacious, racism was strengthened, old age became more lonely and so on. The affluent drove on tax-paid highways to suburbs built with cheap Federal credit and further supported by generous tax deductions. This discrete, almost invisible dole provided them with much more governmental charity than the poor and also helped to tear the society in two.

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The only hope of reversing these ominous trends lies in a democratic political movement which will impose social — and aesthetic — purposes upon government policies. For if the new freedom is not used wittingly, then it will simply serve the old inequities and Washington will continue to promote the urban crisis which it supposedly deplores. In this setting, the questions about the future of city life raised in these books by Mumford, Le Corbusier and Gans are extraordinarily urgent.

The Myth of the Machine is the work of a brilliant generalist. And if I lack the scholarly competence to assess, say, the specific readings of prehistory, a comment on the over-all approach is in order. It takes the form of a compliment which Mumford, who identifies with the anarchism of Kropotkin rather than with the Marxist tradition, will probably dislike. This book reminds me of Frederick Engels.

Mumford is a partisan of garden cities, of the organic, and nonrational, values which are to be found in community life and therefore a critic of a skyscraper advocate like Corbusier. He then turns to history and discovers in the farthest reaches of unrecorded time evidence which supports his own proposals for the twenty-first century. In much the same way, Engels seized upon Morgan's anthropology and proclaimed primitive communism a dialectical moment in the struggle for the classless society of the future. Indeed, I believe that every social commentator thus views the past from the vantage point of present prejudices and I would honor Mumford — and Engels — for being so exuberantly candid about what they are doing. If it were not for such avowedly partisan geniuses the scholarly study of mankind would hardly reveal anything significant about man.

It is Mumford's thesis that one must give "equal weight to dreams, ritual, speech, social intercourse, and social organization rather than to tools alone as the prime agents of man's development. . . ." This idea is, of course, completely at odds with the prehistory which the Marxian popularizers derived from Engels' gloss on Morgan and which was also put forward by some academics.[1] It is also a useful scholarly weapon in Mumford's struggle with the rationalistic city planners who like to reduce human life to abstractions about economic man. He documents his position with copious references to the specialist literature which, to this layman, are both fascinating and compelling.

But when Mumford makes a poetic analogy, from the past which he

1 Engels' enthusiasm often led him into sloppy scholarship but in this case he was much more careful than his disciples. In *The Origin of the Family and Private Property,* he wrote that the emergence of articulated speech was the most important single event of prehistory and he specified that, in the very earliest period of man's life, the organization of the family was a much

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so ingeniously interprets to the future which he fears, his argument is less convincing. There is an "archetypal form," he says, which has existed since the time of the early kings but which has been named only in this generation. This is the megamachine. Ordinary men could perform a wide variety of tasks, including pottery manufacture and weaving, within an autonomous community. The megamachine, on the other hand, was a royal creation for only the kings had the power to build an "invisible structure composed of living, but human parts, each assigned to his special offiice, role and task, to make possible the immense work-output and grand designs of this great collective organisation." And from that day to this, the megamachine has appeared in different guises throughout history: rocket-building is "our exact modern equivalent" of pyramid-building.

This theory either asserts too little or too much. It is a cliché of social and economic history that the division of labor has played a crucial role in the evolution of society and that the hierarchic subordination of functions has taken many guises. If that is all Mumford is saying, then there is no point in claiming the discovery of an unnamed megamachine. On the other hand, equating the Pharaoh's technology with Lyndon Johnson's on the grounds that both require complex organization is an overgeneralization from the evidence. Rocket-building, as John Kenneth Galbraith demonstrated in *The New Industrial State,* provides an excuse for the government subsidy of an essentially revolutionary technology and the profound difference which marks such an undertaking off from pyramid building is much more important than any superficial similarities between the two activities.

But if I would thus quarrel with some of the steps in Mumford's argument, I share many of his conclusions. There is, indeed, a megatechnics coming into existence and, in the sphere of urban design, it is sometimes even urged in the name of humane values. To put the point in somewhat sectarian, but still relevant, terms, there are those who think it possible simply to transfer the title of the means of production from the old order to the new without realizing, like Mumford (or Lewis Sullivan for that matter), that the very way in which technique itself is organized expresses the antihuman values which must be transcended. If that dreaming, ritualistic, declaiming and social essence

more decisive determinant of evolution than the character of work. Mumford himself considers Gordon Childe's Marxist study of *What Happened in History,* along with Frankfort's *Birth of Civilization in the Near East,* to be "the most satisfactory general account available" though he cannot resist the comment that Childe's book is "only slightly biased by his original Marxist slant."

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of man is to be allowed to reach the fullness of its powers, we must, as Mumford insists, design new towns on the basis of new visions.

Yet novelty and modernity alone will not suffice. Le Corbusier, that Gallic champion of the *Bauhaus* spirit, is a case in point. After World War I he rode his bicycle around Paris while wearing a derby —and proclaimed that a house was a *machine à habiter*, a machine to live in.

It is easy enough to denounce the soulless mechanism which seems to be implied in Corbusier's phrase. It is more important first to understand the relevance of his genius. For more than any other modern architect, he understood the connection between urban design and the very character of society. He undoubtedly overstated the case when he argued, in *Vers Une Architecture Moderne* in 1923, that "building is at the root of social unrest today." And yet, there is no question that the present urban chaos which Federal policy has done so much to create is that aspect of the contemporary crisis which is most immediate and accessible in the experience of the ordinary citizen.

Moreover, the motives which impelled Corbusier toward the concept of the Radiant City were impeccably humanistic. "I say: the basic materials of city planning are:

sun,
sky,
trees,
steel,
cement,

in that strict order of importance." To accomplish this, he envisions an environment in which "the 'street' as we know it now has disappeared. All the various sporting activities take place outside the people's homes. The city is entirely green; *it is a Green City*. . . . The keystone behind this city is the *liberty of the individual.*"

These are hardly the words of antihumanist. Yet the way in which Corbusier proposed to implement his vision — by building gigantic skyscrapers with a great population density and thus freeing vast areas of the city for green space — did not actually serve it. For, as a walk through Stuyvesant Town in New York will confirm, all of that sun, sky and trees tends to be functionless and empty and the buildings themselves destroy the human scale. And ultimately, as this book clearly shows, there was a technocrat coexisting with the Mediterranean idealist in Corbusier. The Plan is drawn up by an elite "away from the frenzy in the mayor's offices or the townhall, from the cries of the electorate or the laments of society's victims." The people were going to like strawberries and cream — in this instance, the Radiant City — or else.

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But if Corbusier's vision, for all of its genius, is thus profoundly wrong in the ultimate analysis, it did intuit the spirit of the times. In February, 1968, the Prefect of Paris unveiled his plan for the year 2000. It did not follow the radical proposals which Corbusier had made for that exquisite, unlivable city (they are to be found in *The Radiant City*) but they are very much in line with his thinking. The central innovation is to be the creation of three or four skyscraper complexes for office buildings at the railroad stations of Lyon-Austerlitz, Nord, Est, Batignolles-Saint-Lazare and Montparnasse. "One might ask," Pierre Trey wrote in *Le Monde,* "if the authors of this scheme were not so preoccupied with perfecting the capital as an instrument of production that they forgot to ameliorate the living conditions of 2.8 million Parisians."

Even more reminiscent of Corbusier was the vision of New York put forward by the Regional Plan Association. As Franklin Whitehouse described it in the *Times,* "By the year 2000, Manhattan below Central Park should have clusters of tall office buildings connected directly to subway platforms that are open to light and air." The pedestrians will walk above the traffic; the skyscrapers will be thought of as giant trees nurtured by roots of subways and railroads; and there will be a new tower complex west of Eighth Avenue which will be three times the size of Rockefeller Center.

In short, many of the ideas urged in *The Radiant City* are becoming a reality and this fact, as well as Corbusier's irrepressible spirit, make the book both a historic document and a contemporary comment. But what, then, about Mumford's alternative to Corbusier, the garden city which moves out from the urban density rather than thrusting millions up into the megalopolitan air? Herbert Gans's excellent study of *The Levittowners* is a thoughtful, provocative study of a privately financed and designed "new town" and deserves careful, wide attention.

The belief in the essential vapidity of suburban life is an article of folk-rock faith. In today's youthcult, charcoal cooking is one of the most powerful symbols of what is wrong with Mom and Dad. Gans's analysis of a Levittown in New Jersey near Philadelphia does not confirm this supposedly radical critique of society. In point of fact, the working-class and lower-middle-class population which dominated in Levittown became less parochial and inward, more political and concerned, when they moved into the development.

Secondly, Gans's realistic scholarship does not picture Levitt himself as a malevolent dictator. There were "idealists" and "realists" within the company and the former sometimes won the argument when their proposals were not too costly. Moreover, the builders did not try to impose an institutional pattern upon the city. They tended to reflect,

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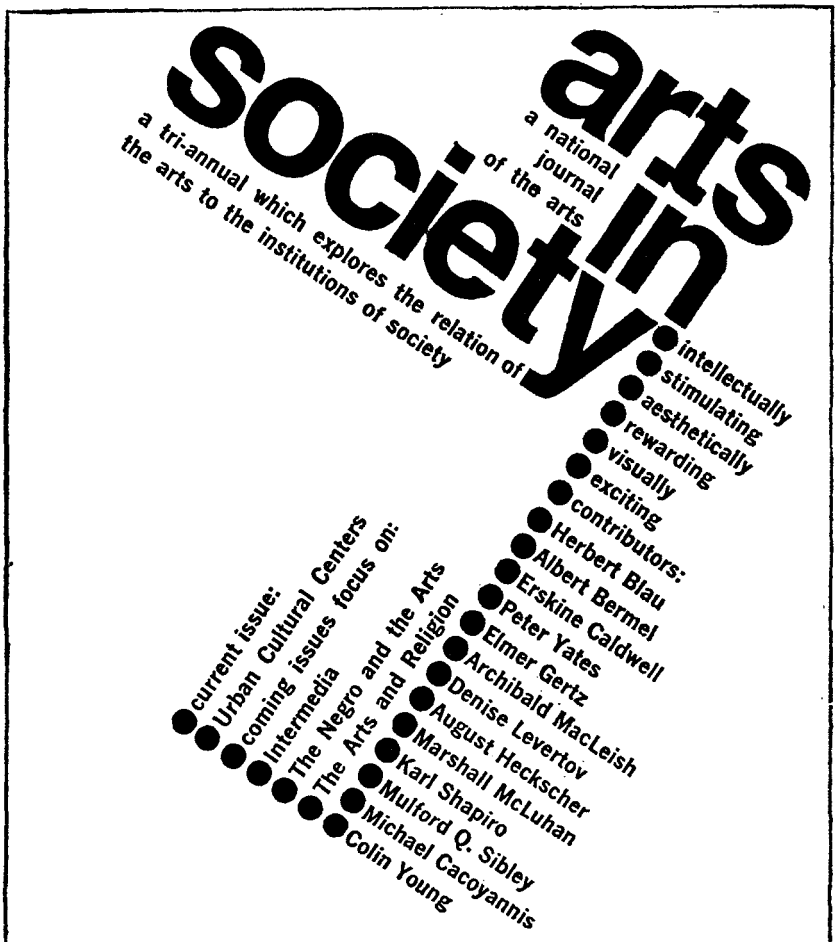

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rather than to create, the preferences of their buyers and the social infrastructure was built up after people moved in. But even though all this is true, and not very Brave-New-Worldish, Levittown is one of the important reasons why there is a crisis in the cities.

As Gans writes of Levitt: "His decision to build another Levittown near Philadelphia with houses in a $12,000-$15,000 price range, determined the age, class and religious characteristics of the population, and these in turn influenced — perhaps determined — the informal and formal groups that developed in the community." But should the power to determine, no matter how indirectly, the character of a new city be left up to a private developer? This question becomes even more pointed when two related facts are kept in mind: that Levittown, and suburbia generally, could not exist without massive Federal support; and that one of the social costs of thus governmentally favoring the private, unplanned development of housing has been the deterioration of the central city and the exacerbation of racism.

In its 1968 Report, the Council of Economic Advisers hinted at this reality by admitting that Government policies "influenced" the distribution of population and economic activity. But it became agnostic and whimsical when it asked itself if anything could be done to channel social expenditures in a socially useful direction. That will not do at all. Either there will be a marked increase in democratic planning in this area of life or else the prevailing antiplan designed by private priorities and subsidized with tax dollars will continue to wreak havoc.

There are, to be sure, immense difficulties in such an undertaking. As Gans points out, most of the members of ethnic and class groups at the point of entry into the mainstream of society want to segregate themselves. It would be preposterous to try to impose an ideal of integration upon them from the top down. But, as Gans also shows, there are significant numbers who do want integrated communities and Levittown proves that they can be created even in a suburban environment. But that will only happen, and decent housing will be built back in the city for these who don't want to move, only if there are profound institutional changes in American life.

The program which *The New York Times* urged in response to President Johnson's "comprehensive but essentially conservative" message on "The Crisis of the Cities" in February, 1968, will do for openers. There must be, the *Times* said (*pace* the Council of Economic Advisers), "a national migration policy to direct the flow of people which now eddies haphazardly from rural backwater to city slum; a national land policy to plan the development of future suburbs and new towns; a national housing policy with much tougher controls over land specula-

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tion and featherbedding construction unions." (For some reason, the *Times,* which is so balanced and reasonable on most issues, cannot forsake an opportunity to whack the unions, a fact which I note here for the record but will not argue because of its complexity.)

If there were such a commitment to planning, and a social investment in the creation of the six million new low-cost housing units during the next ten years which the administration itself admits we need, then it might be possible to rationalize the Model T housing industry. With guaranteed employment for the present membership, the unions might well accept both new technology and new members from among the black and white poor. Threatened with the loss of Federal support unless their private planning conformed to public specifications, the builders might stop promoting the urban crisis. And there even could be a housing sector designed to meet the needs of the American people.

For all these things to come to pass, there would have to be a marked shift to the Left and the growth of a dynamic political movement for structural reform (and not only in the areas under discussion here). For now, the future looks bleak. The big cities will become the site of affluent office buildings on an inhuman scale and stinking slums, a somewhat Corbusier-like world but without any of the Frenchman's zest and values. The federally financed suburbs will continue to maximize private choices and social disasters. And it will probably be harder and harder to find a place for that marvelous, garrulous dreamer and ritual maker whom Mumford locates in our past and seeks in our future.

Michael Harrington

THE DARK LADY

GIACOMO JOYCE. By James Joyce. (With an Introduction and Notes by Richard Ellmann.) Viking. $10.00.

Strictly speaking, this is not a "new work" by James Joyce; of its approximately three thousand words, all but about nine hundred were printed, with running comment, in Ellmann's magnificent biography. The entire manuscript notebook from Joyce's Trieste period has now been published with an introduction, notes and a photographic facsimile of the whole to bulk it out (including fold-out plates of the first and last two pages). At first glance, this may seem like an attempt to give this strange bit of incompletely fictionalized brooding over one of Joyce's students at Berlitz, a girl named Amalia Popper, a part in the canon that it may not be able to bear. The final draft was finished,

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Ellmann guesses, in July or August of 1914, and his remarks on it tend to place this lyrical evocation of an "affair, of eyes, rather than bodies" as transitional work betwen the completed *Dubliners* and *Portrait* (particularly the latter portions). It is also preparation for the transcendence of Stephen Dedalus' lyric manner in the interior monologue of *Ulysses,* where the surface of the prose and the depths of consciousness below it have come to *contain* the intrusions of street noise, remembered song, foreign phrase and urban event, rather than, as in *Portrait,* to be punctuated by them. It is perhaps for this reason that the introduction to the present edition avoids comment on the relationship between Joyce and the actual prototype of the dark anima of the story, going so far as not mentioning her name, although the fact that she was a Jewess and her father's name was Leopold come in for some notice in the biographical study. Ellmann's preface here constantly looks forward to the expansion of themes and fragments that well up in the strophe-like paragraphs of the text, varying from a line of a few words to a complex block of over two hundred, in Joyce's subsequent work.

For anyone who has read the bulk of the story in the previously published fragments, most of the new material will bring few surprises. The self-mocking irony that coils ungentle tendrils around the green longings of over thirty for under twenty is present throughout; the piece opens, not with a description, not with a name or the name of a name — "She!" for example — but with an undercutting "Who?" The title, derived from Casanova's Christian name, invokes a colloquial Italian designation of the cocksman, but the girl of the story is an untouched and besonnetted lady. The continuity of the paragraphs is indeed much more like that of a sonnet sequence than it is of any sort of narrative; various scenes and situations, some obviously weeks apart, are sketched out and inevitably moralized with a start, a sigh, a phrase, a memory or a laugh. A single line may be the skeleton of a conceit, or a rather lush description of a scene, a time of day, or an erotic fantasy may round out a moment of encounter. In all this, what gives continuity is the inevitability of the two parallel lines of man and girl preserving their equidistance: they will not sleep together and their parting will not be tragic. Only the mode of satiric vision changes, and the imagery moves toward the serpentine and the envenomed, through a miniature phantasmagoria of purgation, to an upsurge of release into art: "Youth has an end: the end is here. It will never be. You know that well. What then? Write it, damn you, write it! What else are you good for?"

But it is precisely this bit of nightmare vision for which the earlier fragments leave one unprepared. With a rhythm that builds, through

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all the discontinuities toward the visionary from the imagistic, the sections move from social encounter to the only consummation, devoutly wished into dream. Then a rich, problematic two-hundred-word passage about which Ellmann is strangely silent, in his introduction, notes and comment in the biography as well; it is almost as if these mingled glimpses of various scenes, various cities, and various erotic roles defied a certain kind of exposition. For example:

> A soft crumpled peagreen cover drapes the lounge. A narrow Parisian room. The hairdresser lay here but now. I kissed her stocking and the hem of her rustblack dusty skirt. It is the other. She. Gogarty came yesterday to be introduced. Ulysses is the reason. Symbol of the intellectual conscience. . . .

Gogarty in fact, almost as the fully conceived Mulligan in myth, presides over the mechanism of satiric degradation: the luxury of erotic dreaming is paid for by the stings of the lamia. In one sense, the whole story constitutes the struggle of the imagination to free itself from the conventions of sexual fantasy, both of the soft-fabric-sliding-down-along-welcoming-limbs variety, with its dark promises and sacramental flavor, and of the punitive disenchantment of narrow Parisian rooms. Being free of the lady is being redeemed from the tyranny of certain kinds of picture.

> . . . Why are we left here? The hairdresser lay here but now, clutching head between her knobby knees. . . . Intellectual symbol of my race. Listen! The plunging gloom has fallen. Listen!

As the passage draws to a close, through melodramatically ominous images ("She coils towards me along the crumpled lounge"), the demon figure sheds her guise of tawdrily stylized naturalism ("the hairdresser") revealing the true form of her menace:

> —Jim, love!—
>
> Soft sucking lips kiss my left armpit: a coiling kiss on myriad veins. I burn! I crumple like a burning leaf! From my right armpit a fang of flame leaps out. A starry snake has kissed me: a cold nightsnake. I am lost!
>
> —Nora! —

And with this final cry, the meaning of "the other. She" at the beginning unfolds more fully. Who is "the other" in such a situation: the wife, or the being envisioned in, the condition ascribed to, the passive girl? After

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the cold, waking cry of Nora Joyce's name, the story closes up with images of music, solemnizing and ritualizing farewell (the tune *Youth Has an End* supplants a *Loth to Depart* which accompanies earlier moments), and some purged, fragmentary emblems.

It is this whole remarkable section which, more than any other, gives a ring of imaginative conviction to the whole. Not only in looking forward to the satiric mechanism of metamorphosis in *Circe,* but in an illuminating glance backward at such moments as Gabriel Conroy's epiphanic apprehension of his wife's empty boots at the end of *The Dead,* the passage has great power. Not the least of this is its effect of pulling together the trailing lyric procession of moments.

Whether this and a few other bits justify the elaborate format is a different question; as a not unimportant item of *Nachlass,* it might have perhaps been included in a presumably forthcoming volume of uncollected poems. The notes are useful (there is an erroneously misleading one about an Elizabethan tune); we can correct a tiny textual error (apparently there should be ellipsis marks indicating interrupted continuity between paragraphs 4 and 5 of quotation on p. 355 of *James Joyce).* But one can only hope that the whole brief text will be made more easily accessible than in this almost bibliophilic presentation.

John Hollander

NATURAL SELECTION

FORMS OF DISCOVERY: Critical and Historical Essays on the Forms of the Short Poem in English. By Yvor Winters. Alan Swallow. $8.95.

SELECTED ESSAYS. By William Troy. Edited, and with an introduction by Stanley Edgar Hyman. With a memoir by Allen Tate. Rutgers University Press. $9.00.

"The business of survival," Ivor Winters remarks in *Forms of Discovery,* "is more precarious than the reader may think. . . . Good poems, to put it briefly, do not survive automatically." This is even more true of good criticism, and the two books under review focus sharply on the problem. Winters has, in a sense, ensured his own survival, at least as a paragraph in the history of criticism, by the early adoption of a readily identifiable position from which he has never deviated and which he spent thirty years in defending. William Troy might only have survived in fragments buried in literary journals and anthologies had not his wife and his present editor assembled this posthumous volume. Winters, we are told, "completes his critical canon"

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with this book, and it contains, as well as all his previous ideas about poetry, a guide to his early work and a survey of his best pupils. This is nothing so commonplace as an old man's vanity: it is important to his critical integrity that he should be *there* in the book, standing for a whole and consistent system of values, that there should be a "canon" and that it should be "complete." In a poem symptomatically entitled "On Teaching the Young," he wrote: "The poet's only bliss / Is in cold certitude": the critic's only way of transcending mere paraphrase is the rigorous assessment of poetry in the light of clearly defined absolutes. Troy was just as conscious of the need for the critic to measure his understanding of the text against a coherent system of values, but, Allen Tate tells us, when offered a contract for a book, he was unable to bring his essays to the state of revision and expansion that he felt they needed: his form was the essay, the experimental discourse, and the explicit wholeness of critical vision that a book would demand he perhaps found inhibiting. This may have made his survival more precarious, but now that it is assured by this collection, I think it will be found to make it less problematic than Winters'.

Forms of Discovery rehearses a familiar argument. It emphasizes the ethical basis of the poetic statement and insists that the connotative wealth of language exploited by poetry is only effective if the poet accepts responsibility towards its primary denotative function, which implies also that the felt experience of a poem is only communicated if it is related to a rational structure. This critical position now becomes the basis of a definitive history of the short poem in English. Briefly, this is the story of how the plain style (functional, denotative, rational) of Wyatt and his followers is overtaken by the Petrarchan style (ornamental and loosely structured) of Sidney and Spenser, and how this, in turn, evolves, under the influence of Shaftesbury and Locke, into the uncontrolled associationism of the Romantics. English poetry is almost dead between 1770 and 1900, and it is only rescued by the postsymbolist method of controlled associationism created by poets liberating themselves from romanticism (Tuckerman, Bridges, Valery and T. Sturge Moore are the key figures). The result of this liberation is a renaissance of poetry which is greater even than the sixteenth century because it is not so narrowly denotative.

It is pointless to query individual value judgments, though it is very depressing to find that we end up with the routine verse of Churchill and (as it seems from this book) the boring complacency of J. V. Cunningham, and it is worth asking whether Tuckerman, Bridges and the other affirmed writers would really stand up to the kind of scrutiny that Donne and Yeats get. What is really at stake here is the

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methodology, and it seems to me to be factitious in two ways. In the first place, even if we accept Winters' insistence on the supremacy of "the short poem" as a genre as a critical postulate, it is totally artificial to write a history of poetry based entirely on the modification of its norms. You cannot account for the influence of Spenser and Milton by a discussion of "The Epithalamion" and "Lycidas" because it is obvious that the longer poems have been decisive influences on *all* poetry, long, short or any other size; the same is true of other "genres" — the drama, for example, or prose narrative. This artificial specialization leads Winters to ignore completely the obvious fact that "rational structure" can only be studied in relation to other "structures" — narrative and dramatic. The fallacy of imitative form (the notion that a poem about boredom has to be boring) is an anathema to him (rightly, I think) but he seems to confuse this with forms which *legitimately* imitate (through a properly maintained distance) human actions, relations and states of mind. Perhaps this failure explains his abhorrence of the Romantics, though it is difficult to say since his critique is simply crude and unaware of modern discussion. He gets rid of Wordsworth and Shelley, for example, because they were not what the Victorians thought they were (a task performed a generation ago, and more efficiently, by Pound, Leavis and Eliot), but there is no account of Wordsworth's narrative poems or Shelley's political satires. His objection to Blake is largely to his political ideology because it wasn't gradualist enough. Which only goes to show that Winters hasn't much idea of history, and which points to the second factitious feature in his historiography — its isolation of "literature" as though it were discussable historically without a deep awareness of its whole context. Again, this is likely to become obvious in any discussion of literature after 1789: you can't understand the Romantics unless you understand the Fernch Revolution. This point no doubt smacks of another of Winters' anathemas, historical relativism, but, as Winters has taught consistently, the judgment of literature has to be based on its relationship to human experience, and experience changes. Ultimately his failure to recognize this is a critical failure: part of our experience is reading poetry, and it is an experience which Winters seems determiend to resist. Neither his taste nor his ideas seem to have changed over thirty years, and one begins to wonder how invulnerable to poetry he had really become.

Stanley Hyman, in a very hostile essay on Winters, called him "a bad critic of some importance." I find this unfair, but I feel that Winters might have preferred it to a response which feels bound to dismiss the whole and remain grateful for the particulars. His critical criteria are relevant to all poetry, but they are incomplete. They enable him to offer

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generous and valuable affirmations of poets who do not get enough admiration (in this book especially Wyatt, Jonson, Fulke Greville and, on a minor level, Edgar Bowers and N. Scott Momaday); they also enable him to ask radically challenging questions about poems too comfortably sanctified (Shakespeare's sonnets, and the poems of Donne and Yeats). But the survival of good criticism is not automatic, and I fear that it will be the "importance" which the "canon" ensures rather than the good criticism. Either the baby will go with the bathwater, or the bathwater's murky reflection will be taken for the baby. In a very special sense, Winters had too much integrity to be a great critic: the certitude is frigid.

William Troy is also a writer to be admired for individual insights, and, like Winters, he achieves them through the application of ethical values to the writers he discusses. However, he is a greater critic than Winters because he understands that projection, the imaginative grasp of the sensibility controlling the literary text, is not immersion. Some of the judgments, to be sure, look archaic now (most of the essays here were written in the thirties). For example, he claims that Lawrence didn't care about his art, and that Stendhal can be explained in terms of the Oedipus Complex. But even in essays such as these, where the starting point is so inadequate, he is able to enter so fully into the writer's predicament that he reaches central issues: thus he brings out

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fully the agony of individuation in Lawrence's work. At his best, in the earlier essays on Virginia Woolf (which is a generous and patient demolition) and on Mann, he demonstrates a profound awareness of the most important issues in "the modern tradition" as a whole, and *en route* not only foreshadows the approach to fiction as a poetic structure but the critique of that approach made in recent years by liberal individualists. Only the essays on Scott Fitzgerald seem to me totally unrewarding (one of them, with depressing ominousness, is called "The Authority of Failure"), and this is clearly because he was too close to Fitzgerald in time and place to achieve a clear perspective. In general what emerges from this book is an engagement with modern literature, radically questioning its subjectivity and carefully trying to analyze its predicament in terms of larger cultural patterns, which will take its place with *Axel's Castle* and *New Bearings in English Poetry* as a critique of modernism so close to its impact that it is part of the movement itself.

The general concern to emerge is much more problematic. Troy came to attach increasing importance to myth, not only as a pattern present in all literature but as an instrument of man's salvation. It is a conceptual framework which provides a double problem: in the first place it tends to become reductionist (though Troy is much more tactful than later myth critics), and in the second it tends to turn away from literature towards moral discourse. These are questions which demand lengthy consideration. For the time being it is perhaps sufficient to suggest that Troy found the essay the most viable critical form because he understood the need to maintain the flexibility of his conceptual framework — a flexibility that a genuinely unified book might have undermined: the price to be paid for the single vision was too high. There might have been a lesson here for Winters: like Troy he had a fine mind, but unlike him, his mind was less fully engaged with literature than committed to his identity. Engagement rather than certitude is Troy's first quality, and though it may not have been his "bliss", its survival is an urgent necessity.

John Goode

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A PRIDE OF POETS

THE ELEGIES OF A GLASS ADONIS. By C. A. Trypanis. With a typographical note by Will Carter. Chilmark Press. $12.50.

THE IKONS AND OTHER POEMS. By Lawrence Durrell. E. P. Dutton & Co. $3.50.

SHORT POEMS. By John Berryman. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $4.50.

NEW AND SELECTED POEMS. By Jean Garrigue. Macmillan. $5.95.

"A" 1-12. By Louis Zukofsky. Doubleday. $4.95.

PREPOSITIONS. The Collected Essays of Louis Zukofsky. Horizon Press. $5.00.

WORDS. Poems by Robert Creeley. Scribners. $4.95.

POEMS 3. By Alan Dugan. Yale. $4.50.

This is a more distinguished bunch of books than a professional reviewer of poetry is usually likely to find on his plate for one meal, and the feeling perhaps is that it is rich, but it is indigestible. To put it another way, there is a distinguished essay by Michael Oakeshott called *The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind.* One has an uneasy sense that these poets are likely to converse with each other only in one's own head, that to each other they might have little to say. Trypanis and Durrell are both immensely literary poets with their hearts set backward-looking in the same East Mediterranean post-Byzantine world. Their line is the smooth cadence, their tone affectionate resignation. Berryman in the earlier poems in his volume, like the magnificent "Winter Landscape," the bravely titled "2 September, 1939" (for there was Auden with that title too), the funny and savage "A Professor's Song," is Audenesque in a good sense, the poetical critic and appreciator of a culture, but moving from an eclectic stylistic adroitness to a more personal, baffling, disjointed manner of his own.

Miss Garrigue is a much more direct poet, finely indifferent to the thought of stances and strategies, or her stance and strategy, rather, that of an abundant drinker and celebrator of life. Louis Zukofsky, in this long poem, is seeing what can be done with Pound and William Carlos Williams in relation to a setting in American history more rooted than Pound's but more open to the European past than Williams'. His little prose essays of many years, *Prepositions,* have an astonishing concision, honesty and directness. At the same time it is hard not to see him, to see all the older poets in this group, as part of history, samples of a "period." Even Robert Creeley has acquired a recognizability which is partly the recognizability of a manner. We say, "How typically

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Creeley!" before making the effort to get through the manner to the substance of the poem. It has been part of Alan Dugan's strength as a poet to aim at a brutal directness, dispensing with all manners (even the antipoetic manner, even the antistyle style). Yet though desperation is the substance of Dugan's poetry, one can perhaps sense in this third volume a new kind of desperation, that about writing a poem at all: one feels sometimes, "This is an exercise, in disappointing stale and bored expectations." One could use these volumes, in fact, for a sermon on our culture, the continuing and rapid hunger with which it falsifies responses, erects modes in order to cancel them, and contrast a mode like the Augustan where over a century Pope, Goldsmith and Crabbe, say, are having a real conversation with each other. One wants, however, to do justice to the poetry, timelessly, if that is still a possible concept: and to see the poems as living, if they are still living, not as just ready to be docketed in the newest glass case in the great contemporary culture museum. To quote briefly, to make brief remarks, is perhaps the only fair way of setting about this task.

Constantine Trypanis' long poem is given a lavish advantage to the eye by the beautiful rare cutting of Arrighi italic in which it is set, and it has been given an advantage to my ear by hearing him read it aloud to me in his equally beautiful voice. The mode is one of piety and retrospection, a mode like that of Eliot's *Ash Wednesday* with a less intense agony and ardour:

> *—Lady of Many Favours, protect*
> *those flowers of glass*
> *flowers and angels of glass*
> *guardians of your image on the altar.*

The central image is of a culture preserved brittley in glass,

> *glass flowers no fingers ever reach. The eyes*
> *of an imprisoned child still stare out of those windows,*
> *a glass Adonis watching a glass spring.*

The poem evokes a culture not dying and rotting to give birth to new life (*si le grain ne meurt*), but preserved in glass images, that gather dust, with a sterile pathos. If the diction seems both pure and dead, this is appropriate to the theme; appropriate also that the beautiful type and setting seems to make the poem an object to be looked at, clear, exact and brittle, rather than a gesture reaching out to us. But Trypanis does not in the end want his memories to be gorgonized even in glass:

> *Adonis, glass Adonis, gnaw like a trapped red fox*
> *your own clenched bone to fly the spring that snapped.*

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Free, you will see your eyes melt back to life,
and neither owl will cry nor the round cloud growl,
the eyes are one calm stare, some pure circle
drawn where the ancient
scream of the red-beaked birds and the unheard
voice of an open scroll melt in still song
like the timeless blue of a china bowl.

The red-beaked birds are Aphrodite's doves, the scroll is the Old Testament and the New, the china bowl is Eliot's Chinese jar that still moves in its stillness. This is a very late postsymbolist manner in great purity, and it is strange, I do not know whether intended, how the "timeless blue of a china bowl" gets us back in the last line to the world of brittle artifacts from which the poem was a pilgrimage. One admires but feels still enclosed. Calm is a prison.

Durrell's latest volume is like a footnote to Trypanis: how a great liberating tradition, of art and religion, brooded on too fondly while the world changes, becomes gorgonized:

APHRODITE

Not from some silent sea she rose
In her great valve of nacre
But from such a one — O sea,
Scourged with iron cables! O sea,
Boiling with salt froths to curds,
Carded like wood on the moon's spindles,
Time-scarred, bitter, simmering prophet.
On some such night of storm and labour
Was hoisted trembling into our history—
Wide with panic the great eyes staring . . .

Of man's own wish this speaking loveliness,
Of man's own wish this deathless petrifact.

But the petrifact is itself perishable. In another poem, "Byzance":

Only the objects of their past estate remain,
Dispersing now like limbs in different museums.
The crowns and trumpets tarnish easily,
The tangles of ribbon rot like heads of hair
In cupboards where they kept the holy chrism.
Only the eye in an ikon here or there,
Amends and ponders and reflects neglects
Dead monarchs toughened to a stare.

What would Durrell and Trypanis have to say to Berryman? Or he to them? One could say that he might say that the past need not petrify,

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it can liberate the imagination a little from a noisy, vulgar, constricting, explosive present:

NOTE TO WANG WEI

How could you be so happy, now some thousand years
disheveled, puffs of dust?
It leaves me uneasy at last,
Your poems tease me to the verge of tears
and your fate. It makes me think.
It makes me long for mountains & blue waters.
Makes me wonder how much to allow.
(I'm reconfirming, God of bolts & bangs,
Of fugues & bucks, whose rocket burns & sings.)
I wish we could meet for a drink
in a "freedom from ten thousand matters."
Be dust myself pretty soon; not now.

The good hard-won colloquial ease of that late Berryman style can risk grazing the sentimental,

Your poems tease me to the verge of tears,

and can risk using a cliché with the double irony of not sneering at the cliché but using it flatly as it is usually used: "*It makes me think.*" This extreme ease comes from the casual strengths of American spoken speech, arrived at in Berryman after a long apprenticeship in other people's styles: as in this variation on Yeats's heart-and-head theme and on the topics of Yeats's "The Circus Animals' Desertion":

—You are an animal trainer, Heart replied.
Without your animals leaping at your side
No sun will save you, nor this bloodless pride.

—What must I do then? Must I stay and work
With animals, and confront the night, in the circus?

—You leárn from animals. You leárn in the dark.

I at first thought it better not to quote from Miss Garrigue who is a poet in a very broad sense in a Whitmanesque tradition, but perhaps it would be better to say that she has a kind of fluency and abundance which one associates with certain kinds of woman poet, Edith Sitwell or the Comtesse de Noailles. There is splendidly much of her and of her lavish apprehension of seasons and passions but one usually needs a lot of it on the page, too essentially fluid to be detachable in chunks. But I was wrong. Here is a poem in which the abundance is condensed. No poet for dyspeptics, though, or compulsive rejectors:

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Have driven in carriages, by violets traveled
In a field stolen over. In clear land what mist!
Of its long-bodied field blues hung in a heap—
Or the blur is of jewels or blush of cheeks, lips—
Seen from a distance where the air presses round,
Coloring the long-bodied heads in a group.
Nearby a sea wall. Clear panes of sea lifted,
Till the flash of the soft foam smokes.
Vinous roofs of the berry. A gardener strolling
High up in a heaven of straw for the oranges.
What presence contains us! You bearded!
Like that statue we saw embraced
By the rose grown over its brow.
Like azures to drink. The plane trees deep!
As, vagrant of pebbles, a pauper of leaves,
The snail delicately pulls in its horns,
Stopped by our carriage, our riding on fields,
Gone in to all that he is.

One has a feeling, in fact, often that Miss Garrigue is going to be excessively lush, loosely associative, but this real risk is usually surmounted, as here (all the danger of the exclamatory, invocational style) by a sudden surprising delicacy and precision. The snail, I think, saves this poem from being just a succession of Monetesque color splashes, just a rave-up for France. Edith Sitwell and the Comtesse de Noailles could have done the statue with the rose grown over its brow, the drinkable azures (—"The plane trees deep!" with the three strong stresses is more after Hopkins—) but they could not have done the snail.

A lifetime's work, as ambitious as *Paterson* or the *Cantos,* Mr. Zukofsky's long poem cannot be criticized here but merely hailed with the respect it deserves. The constructive idea is a free, expansive form which can bring in the most remote and intellectual ideas, if they are creative ideas, and the most personal anecdotes of a lifetime: prose, documents, antipoetic detail can also be fitted in somehow. Robert Creeley, in his useful introduction, speaks of this mode as the poem as autobiography (and it is clear also that this is what *Paterson* is and also that to regard the *Cantos* as autobiography — rather than epic — is the only way to absolve Pound of the charge of being, in his formal intentions, like Mauberley, "wrong from the start.") One should merely note that this new form is not free form: in *Paterson,* in the *Cantos,* and here, there are three fairly rigorous technical rules of abruptness, disjunction and elimination of prosy explanatory context (so that each of these poems sends the reader out on a research job about the life and reading of the poet). Such poems are also open-ended in two senses; there is no formal reason for their not being added to indefinitely, so long as the poet remains alive and interested. More subtly, they are

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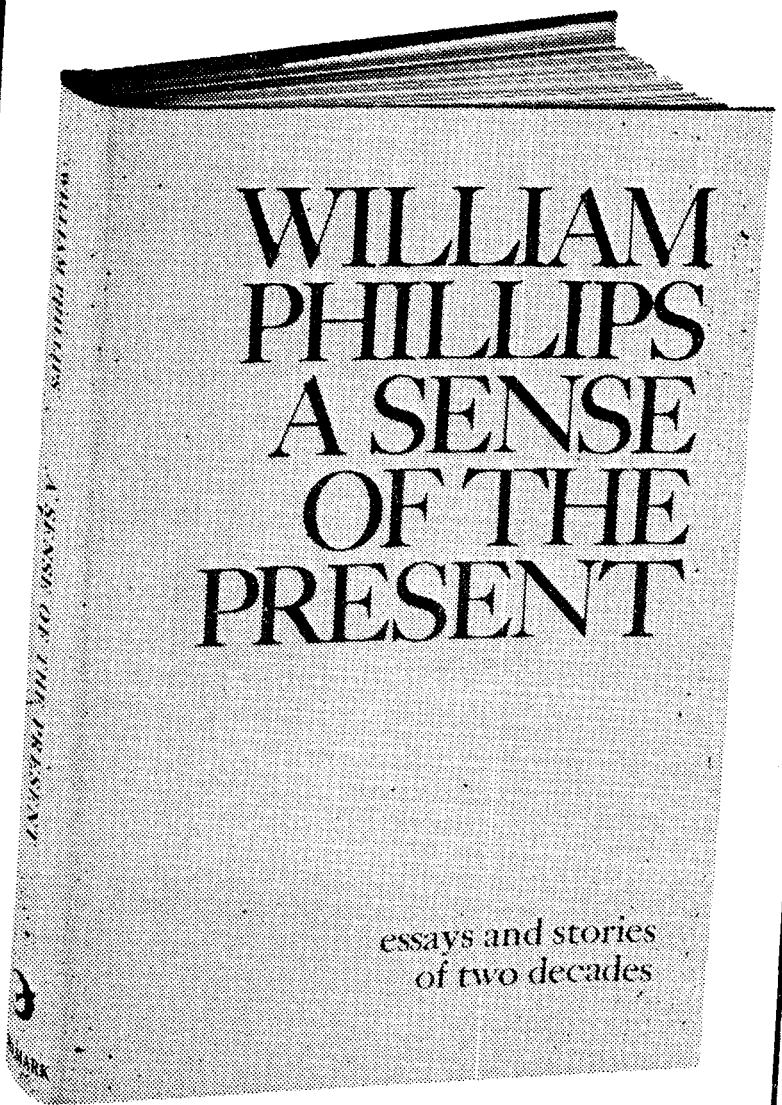

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open-ended at the beginning as well as the end: *Paterson* and the *Cantos* make fullest sense if read as expansive continuations of what the author was doing in his earlier, shorter poems. They can also be broken up into assemblages of shorter poems, like this one from Zukofsky's section 5:

An animate still-life — night.
Leaves, autumn.
Thread the middle.

A cigarette,
Leaf-edge, burning
obliquely urban,
the branches of tree air comfort.

Yet it would be wrong to think of Pound, Williams or Zukofsky as simply packing a number of perfect small imagist poems in a kind of loose conglomerate of assertion and anecdote. A certain sense of trembling and dangerous continuity, like soft stuff catching on to the next rock and becoming a thread or a nerve, makes the reading of such long poems, in this new style, peculiarly exciting, the reader himself becoming the constructor. Zukofsky's own essays will be an indispensable text for whoever does undertake the really hard thinking that will be necessary to see how imagism, a cult partly of the very short, the very depersonalized or objective poem, could result in the end in extremely long, personal and subjective poems of a quite new kind. It seems to me that even *now* we can only call attention to the kind, and some of its more broadly obvious characteristics. We still completely lack an accurate and detailed enough description of the aesthetics of such a poem to form a set of prescriptive rules either for writing it or judging it, or even for being more than hesitantly sure that our own judgments about whether parts of such an at once organic and ramshackle whole work or don't work are not mainly subjective. Zukofsky, Pound, Williams all hated the stuffier kind of academic scholarship, but a really rigorous academic examination is what they now deserve and need.

Creeley and Dugan, the two younger American poets for whom I feel wholehearted admiration, don't, partly because they write short and direct poems, need such a circuitous attention. I feel Dugan in this third volume is more wily and hasn't anything with the frightening force of his great poem, in *Poems 2*, about sharks. Almost a kind of charm, a winsomeness is developing, and it disconcerts one: also a kind of new emotional distance from the material which makes a poise between benevolence, self-irony and the danger of indifference. Yet here is a good poem, I think, plain diction and through-thrust logical construction, but does something go wrong, a sort of stumble in the last stanza,

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particularly a sort of flatness in its last two lines? (One notes that the topic and the handling of it have an odd affinity with Philip Larkin's poem on "the toad work": I never thought I would find any affinities between these two.)

ON WORK

The smell in the diamond morning was
of a restaurant cleaning up. Two men
carried a container full of slops
to a commercial garbage truck
and drove the night-time tares away
once appetite had made the day.

Portage of day from night to night,
I had hoped to sit in the staring sun
at bitter ease, cool in the tares
of will, and also wonder how to be
not part of it, the cartage, slops,
and increments of day. Who is to eat
with such an attitude?, wooing the world
with claims. Porters and their freights
form in the aches, so I must carry three
pieces of paper and a ball-point pen
from one desk to another for profit
while there is profit under the sun.

Profit-prophet pun, maybe, in the last line? I don't know. But otherwise it is rather drably smart and flat.

As for Creeley, the enormous charm has always been there, and a great danger I suppose, though wonderful in the man himself, a mixture of Captain Hook and Robert Louis Stevenson. The dangerous tightrope for Creeley is between ease and difficulty with slightness. I will put down an ambiguous example, incorporating self-criticism: was your journey really necessary, your little poem worth writing? But the last two lines can also be seen as a slap in the face for the imperceptive reader:

WATER MUSIC

The words are a beautiful music.
The words bounce like in water.

Water music,
loud in the clearing

off the boats,
birds, leaves.

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They look for a place
to sit and eat —

no meaning,
no point.

They? Us? Tremendous tact anyway in avoiding crudely pointful stresses. . . . In the end, I suppose, these voices do converse.

G. S. Fraser

WHEN WE DEAD AWAKEN

TREBLINKA. By Jean-Francois Steiner. Simon & Schuster. $5.95.

Too much discussion of behavior under Nazi persecution has been focused on "Jewish character" and not enough on the more general question of twentieth-century holocaust. Yet concentration camp survivors have much in common with atomic bomb survivors I have worked with in Hiroshima, despite the very great differences in the two experiences. One way to move beyond the confused polemic that has surrounded the still disturbing issue of Jewish response to the Nazi program of extermination is to relate it to the psychology of massive death immersion. Such a perspective helps us to approach Jean-Francois Steiner's alternatingly brilliant and misleading account of a "model death camp" and of the rising of its inmates in armed rebellion.

In first depicting the Jews' failure to resist being herded off to Treblinka, Steiner emphasizes their historical conditioning through persecution in Lithuania and elsewhere in Eastern Europe ("Suffering was their business"), as well as the deceptiveness of Nazi manipulations ("based on a rather shrewd understanding of the Jewish [speculative] intelligence"). But probably more important than their taking advantage of any specifically Jewish traits was the constant aura of death the Nazis imposed by means of their pre-camp brutalizations. For a central feature of anyone's encounter with death, most characteristically during massive holocaust, is a cessation of feeling, a desensitization or *psychic numbing.*

Hiroshima survivors, for instance, recall being fully aware, immediately after the bomb, of the grotesque scene of dead and dying around them, but of very quickly finding themselves feeling no emotion whatsoever — experiencing what one called "a paralysis of the mind." Such psychic numbing includes elements of denial ("If I see nothing, then death is not taking place"), and the severance of ordinary human

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bonds of identification ("I see you dying, but I am not related to you or to your death"). It can be a highly useful defense against death anxiety, the terror of contemplating one's own annihilation; and against death guilt, the self-condemnation for remaining alive while others die. But like all defenses it can overstep itself and then become in itself a kind of dying; it can produce the "death-like submission" Steiner describes, and thereby facilitate the Nazi program of "death in two stages: you put men to sleep, then you kill the sleepers." Partly aware they were being annihilated and strongly resisting this awareness, Jewish communities would either ignore or treat with great hostility carriers of bad news and would-be resistors. Steiner's picture of the Jewish Councils as aiding the Nazis' deception and organization is close to Hannah Arendt's, but one must also recognize that the Councils were serving as a kind of repository for *all* Jewish numbing — that is, for the idea that submission, hard work or compliance with some as yet unfathomed system could preserve lives.

Concerning behavior in the camps themselves, Steiner has been unfairly criticized for his unsparing depiction of Jewish participation in the Nazi program of murder, though the same thing has been previously recorded by many camp survivors, much more brutally in fact by Tadeusz Borowski in his "This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen." To some extent the relationship between Nazis and Jews followed conventional patterns of victimizer and victim: the former establishes his sense of omnipotent conquest of death by means of rendering the latter, with whom he can compare himself, ahuman and death-tainted. What was extraordinary was the nature of the Nazis' project — the systematic murder of millions of Jews — *and the extent of psychic numbing this project required of both victim and victimizers.* Steiner is superbly ironic in his evocation of the mentality of the Nazis and the extremity of the numbing *they* required for their task. In order to circumvent technologically the intolerable guilt of direct killing ("it was not the ill will of the victims that was an issue, but the human inadequacy of the executioners"), they found it "necessary to invent a killing machine." And we read how gas van gave way to gas chamber as "engineering took over where good will left off. An almost perfect system had been created. A new world was about to be born."

This mentality finds full expression in the grotesque perfectionism of Kurt Franz (Franz Stangl), the head of the Treblinka camp. But in emphasizing Franz's psychological astuteness in manipulating the Jews, Steiner overlooks the extent to which these manipulations might have been necessary to the victimizers for maintaining their numbing. The false train station constructed at Treblinka (synthetic ticket window,

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painted first- and second-class waiting rooms, clock fixed at 3:00 P.M.) was something more than merely a means of deceiving Jewish arrivals until the last possible moment: it maintained an "as-if" situation for the S.S. as well, an image of a peaceful town in an ordinary world of decent men. The Nazis' absolute focus upon technology and technique took on a numbed logic of madness: pride in efficiency of killing ("Three quarters of an hour, door to door"); and dedicated efforts to carry out the seemingly impossible task of burning eight hundred thousand bodies within a feasible time schedule, eventually solved by a "specialist" applying the principle of "using the good ones to burn the bad ones" — the good ones being old bodies, fat ones, women and children, because these are the most inflammable. (One can say that related patterns of numbing, though with greater technological distancing and easier ideological justification, have surrounded the making, testing and using of nuclear weapons.) Then, in the Nazis' pagan victory celebration (on solving the corpse-burning problem) we encounter momentary evidence of their special aberration, of the madness beneath the numbing. But it is well to keep in mind that the vision of immortalization through killing which they carried to such a macabre extreme — of murder for a "sacred purpose" — remains an active one in many quarters, and can be found in the conspiratorial images of such groups as the American Radical Right.

Steiner is a little less reliable in his representation of the numbing of Jewish inmates. At times he seems almost to romanticize the psychological process taking place by attributing it to a unique spiritual commitment to survival, and insisting that men raised entirely on Jewish culture are "inaccessible to despair." At other times he is closer to the truth when he tells how the Jewish inmate "ceased to be a man," how "in order to survive . . . [he] drowned his own sensibility." Here too I was reminded of Hiroshima survivors — of one who stayed for some time after the bomb fell in a damaged railroad station filled with dead and dying and told me "we were just like sleepwalkers," and of Dr. Hachiya's classic description of survivors who "walked silently toward . . . the distant hills . . . like automatons. . . . The exodus of a people who walked in the realm of dreams." Underlying this generalized atmosphere of numbing encountered in massive holocaust is an imposed image of the "end of the world," together with a lingering sense that the principles governing life and death have been violated once and for all and that one has, even as a victim, participated in this violation.

Jews were psychically driven into one of two directions of numbing: that of the "walking corpse" or "*Muselmänner*" (so named by prisoners under the mistaken notion that absolute submissiveness was characteristic

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of Moslem psychology), a state so extreme that, as Primo Levi once put it, "One hesitates to call them living: one hesitates to call their death death"; or else a much more integrated state characteristic of privileged Jewish prisoners who (we learn from Steiner) "know nothing [and] act as if death does not exist." In this last pattern numbing is an aid to survival, while in the first its extreme form is a surrender (and prelude) to death. No inmate could avoid elements of one or both of these states, which in fact tended to overlap with each other. Even such things as gallows humor and eroticism (which had their counterparts in Hiroshima also) could reinforce numbing: the first by assuming what Steiner calls "professional attitudes" of corpse-carriers as a means of warding off the realization of what one was actually doing ("Hey, Moshe! don't eat so much. . . . Think of us who'll have to carry you!"); the second resembling the orgies taking place at the time of the plagues of the Middle Ages, and denying the pervasiveness of death by means of a pseudo-affirmation of life.

What eventually emerged was a form of *collaborative numbing* which was perhaps the unique psychological feature of the concentration camp experience. It was maintained through a tenuous but functional equilibrium in the victimizer-victim relationship. This equilibrium required sufficient brutalization to keep the Jews in a numbed, nonresistive state and at the same time to permit victimizers their sense of omnipotence, but it had to stop short of either producing too many *Muselmänner* (which at first actually occurred and greatly interfered with getting the work done) or interfering with guards' own numbing by making them aware of the consequences of their actions. The key to collaborative numbing was a gruesome work ethic, the psychological significance of which has not been adequately appreciated. In addition to their own conscientiousness in carrying out their project, victimizers succeeded in conveying to victims the literal message that "work equaled life." The gas chamber became "the factory" and everything was organized along assembly-line principles. Precisely this numbing focus upon "work" obscured the issue of "works." Never has the distinction been more critical.

Contributing to collaborative numbing were a series of everyday "games" ending in death and humiliation for Jews, a rather dramatic festival of arts and sports staged by Franz with performing musical, literary and boxing talents drawn from among the prisoners, and a strange but significant pattern of "socializing" between victimizers and victims which began to take place toward the end. Steiner tells us that the two groups were a bit stiff with one another until "the ice was broken," and ironically points up the absurd collaboration involved

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throughout: "This did not prevent the S.S. from killing the Jews during the day, but the prospect of having to part company soon mellowed them a little. They had been together for such a long time, they had so many memories in common; and this camp was a kind of joint production." The "as if" situation, then, was a collaborative phenomenon of denial and numbing (" 'The gas chambers? What gas chambers? The smell? What smell?' "); even concerning the approaching end of Treblinka itself "everyone . . . pretended not to know it." What this meant for Jewish prisoners in general was that "all of their activities . . . contributed to the same end: the death of their people."

But not quite. Despite everything, the Jews rebelled, and Steiner's central purpose in writing the book is to tell the story of their rebellion. Since all action depends upon images, rebels of any kind must have the capacity to imagine the overturning of their immediate world. Jews were for the most part denied this capacity by the numbing imposed upon them — hence the wisdom of the statement attributed to a physician-prisoner, when discussing the possibilities of fellow inmates joining in a rebellion: "First they will have to come to terms with death." What he meant was the necessity of not only taking risks but of confronting the true nature of the environment. In this sense there may be truth in Steiner's claim that suicides among those facing almost certain death represented a "first affirmation of freedom" in that prisoners were assuming a certain amount of autonomy and "had ceased to be perfect slaves" — though we also wonder to what extent this is a Camus-like reconstruction of what must have been a dismal and dispiriting scene.

In explaining the extraordinary transformation of numbed prisoners into organized rebels, Steiner emphasizes one overriding principle: that of "bearing witness," of sending "a message to the future." As one dying prisoner puts it, "What we need is a . . . victory of the dead. . . . [A] victory and witnesses to tell about it." The rhetorical tone with which he has prisoners express this principle has led some reviewers to reject it, and to emphasize more conventional explanations for rebellion — feelings of hatred and revenge. But what Steiner is getting at, correctly I believe, is the sense of special mission characteristic of survivors (or those who must survive by proxy), the need to render significant the deaths they have seen. Bearing witness has been of great importance for concentration camp and atomic bomb survivors in carrying out what is for many a permanent task, the inner formulation of their experiences in a way that restores balance to death and life. In Hiroshima this mission became quickly tied in with the elimination of nuclear weapons and the quest for world peace. With concentration camp survivors it has been actively associated with the establishment of a Jewish State in

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Israel, images of which, Steiner tells us, existed during incarceration and served as inspiration for rebellion. In this way the formulations of survivors become related to the reassertion of what Steiner calls the "immortal community," but he is wrong in his implication that this is a specifically Jewish need or accomplishment. Rather, the quest for such symbolic immortality, for living on through the larger groups and images to which one is attached, is part of a compelling universal urge, and in fact man's only way of coping with the fact of death.

For Treblinka inmates the idea of carrying out such a mission through rebellion was strongly reinforced by news of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, as well as by witnessing the unusually vicious treatment given its participants when they arrived at the camp. But the leaders of the uprising, one suspects, tended to be less susceptible to numbing than did most — whether because they had experienced less brutalization, or because they were the kinds of Jews whose assertiveness had led them to reject the submissive stance of ghetto life and make their way in the larger world.

The final stimulus to rebellion in Treblinka was, of course, the mounting evidence that the camp and all of its inmates were headed for extinction. One may therefore say that the anticipation of individual death merged with the fear of collective disappearance; the rebellion became a means, as Steiner suggests, of transcending an ultimate sense of nothingness.

Steiner's problem with the book resembles that of the prisoners themselves: the nature of *his* historical record. Certainly his relationship to Treblinka — his father died there — is a valid reason for undertaking a work of this kind. Nor can his impulse to vindicate his parents' memory serve as an adequate reason for dismissing the product as a mere act of filial piety. But the form he has chosen gets the book into deep trouble. It is a kind of "nonfiction novel" which aims both at documentary accuracy (it is based upon study of written records and interviews of survivors of the Treblinka rebellion) and the novelist's imaginative freedom (demonstrated in tone, general details, and especially in conversational dialogue). And to these contradictory pulls is added a somewhat histrionic romanticization of Jews and Jewishness which both oversimplifies the issues surrounding the rebellion and renders the conversations of its plotters stiff and unreal.

About midway through the book one begins to lose faith in the narrative, both in the historian's accuracy of documentation and the novelist's psychic truth — while at the same time retaining admiration for Steiner's frequently impressive insights. It is with considerable relief that one encounters such a statement as "The oral tradition of Treblinka

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has not preserved what Berliner did that morning" — because then one at least knows where one stands. But the relief is accompanied by the distressing uncertainty about whether that same oral (or written) tradition had actually preserved all the other details put forth. And when, toward the end of the book, a long passage is quoted from written testimony describing a key moment in the rebellion, one reads it with both fascination and reassurance, so much so that one is a bit reluctant to return to the author's less authoritative voice.

The blurring of assumptions contained in the "nonfiction novel" is undoubtedly part of the general ambiguity surrounding contemporary standards of reality. But Steiner also struggles with the more specific problem of recreating twentieth-century holocaust. Japanese attempting to produce what is called "A-bomb literature," like their Western counterparts who write of the concentration camp experience, find their creative powers blunted by the unmanageable dimensions of technological violence, the absurd or disconnected deaths, and by a particularly intense form of creative guilt. For whether or not the writer (or artist in general) is actually a survivor of one of the two holocausts, he experiences a survivor-like sense of being bound to the dead. Haunted by what he perceives as their judgments, he is likely to impose upon himself an impossible standard of literal recreation of "how things were," a kind of sacred historical truth which leads him to what might be called the documentary fallacy; or else a need to glorify the dead and deny them the dignity of their limitations.

Steiner is prevented from fully transcending these difficulties by certain assumptions he makes and by the form he has chosen. As a secondhand documentary his account cannot have the immediacy of Yoko Ota's and Dr. Hachiya's memoirs of the atomic bomb, or the early concentration camp writings of Rousset, Levi, Wiesel or Bettelheim, and he makes no attempt to apply the quality of documentary imagination which Resnais did in a different medium in *Night and Fog*. Nor does he embark on the kind of literary experiment which might be equal to the subject novelistically, as, for instance, in Rawicz' *Blood from the Sky*, Semprun's *The Long Voyage* or Schwarz-Bart's *The Last of the Just*.

Yet Steiner does succeed in doing something that no one else writing about concentration camps has up to now been able to do. By telling the story of one of them, he powerfully and simultaneously evokes two seemingly incompatible actualities: the combined Nazi and Jewish numbing associated with mass murder, and the remarkable accomplishment of a few hundred prisoners in breaking out of that numbing to rebel and produce a handful of survivors to tell the tale.

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His own mission of reestablishing Jewish courage has undoubtedly led him to exaggerate the importance of the rebellion in relationship to the more fundamental question of the Nazi extermination project; and one would have wished for the disciplined integrity of form which this kind of extreme event demands of historian and novelist alike. But the rebellion the book depicts has considerable significance, and not only for Jews, because it raises questions about human possibilities that must be taken into account as we continue to examine man's ways of coping with the unlimited dimensions of twentieth-century killing.

Robert Jay Lifton

CARDS OF IDENTITY

NABOKOV: HIS LIFE IN ART. By Andrew Field. Little, Brown. $8.95.

There was once a double agent whose lonely and risky career took him back and forth between the Russian and English-speaking worlds. He was a great master of deception and role-playing and specialized in throwing investigators off his track by circulating misleading clues and ambiguous hints as to his whereabouts and intentions. He had great powers of endurance and concentration and a fabulous memory. After many years spent out in the cold, he came in, to spend his remaining years surrounded by admirers who honored him and paid him well, but who could never be sure that they had gotten to the bottom of him.

We are speaking, of course, about Nabokov, that extraordinary double agent of modern literature, rather than about Kim Philby, the notorious British spy and traitor, whose improbable career sounds like a typically "perverse," "extravagant" episode in a Nabokov novel. Nabokov's fiction is full of spies and spying: Kinbote peeping at Shade and the odious Emerald-Izumrudov spying on Kinbote; Humbert spying on Dolores and her mother and Quilty spying on Humbert and his nymph; Margot Peters and Axel Rex spying on the blinded Albinus in *Kamera Obskura*; the nymphet police agent planted in Krug's apartment in *Bend Sinister* spying on Krug; the "suicide," Smurov, in *The Eye* (the title is more adequately translated as *The Spy*) making notes on his own posthumous identity as it is variously constituted in the reflections of half a dozen of his Berlin acquaintances.

The spy business keeps up in Nabokov's several autobiographies: in the Russian *Drugiye Berega* (*Other Shores*) he remarks that his task is to spy out and follow secret themes in the midst of his overt destiny,

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and in *Speak Memory* he speaks of descrying a hidden watermark (obviously a planted, encoded message) "whose unique design becomes visible when the lamp of art is made to shine through life's foolscap." Spies not only snoop in documents, they may also find themselves looking through windows: thus the past in *Speak Memory* is recovered in terms of a series of viewings through framed apertures opening directly, and magically, into the childhood world from which the narrator has been separated by the Russian Revolution and by twenty years and more of adulthood. Train windows, a magic-lantern slide show, the miniaturized, irridescent universe revealed by peeping into a microscope, and the stained-glass window on the staircase of the Nabokov house outside St. Petersburg, all have important roles to play in evoking the "vivid patches of the past" recovered, frame by frame and chapter by chapter, in *Speak Memory.*

Spying through windows presents the spy business at its riskiest and most abject. The agent is out there in the cold and the dark, liable to detection, and cuts a pathetic and absurd figure. One remembers Kinbote cursing the drawn shades of Shade's house as he falls about in Shade's shrubbery and one remembers, above all, Humbert's great fantasia (II, 164-65, in the Olympia Press edition of *Lolita*) on "*mes fenêtres.*" There he remembers being misled by "a jewel-bright window wherein my lurking eye . . . would make out from afar a half-naked nymphet stilled in the act of combing her Alice-in-Wonderland hair." Unfortunately, it is a trick of the eye — "whereupon the lighted image would move and there would be nothing in the window but an obese partly clad man reading the paper."

Trick of the eye or evidence of a counter-conspiracy? Is either view in the window frame true or is the whole affair a frame-up? The man outside the window is at the mercy of what he sees or supposes he sees. He cannot break the glass without giving himself away and the history of all intelligence work shows that espionage agents are invariably spied upon. Spies in Nabokov, like spies in real life, become increasingly paranoid as they attempt to carry out their secret projects and may succumb, finally, to a condition of "self-referential mania," wherein all parts of reality — clouds moving in the sky, water dripping from a tap, noises in the street — are felt to be engaged in a busy, loquacious, yet impenetrable conspiracy against the spy-maniac. So tormented and chivvied about, it is small wonder that the spy turns in anguished nostalgia, like the prisoner in *Invitation to a Beheading,* to relive imaginatively the apparently unequivocal joys of childhood — to "the garden where we used to roam and hide" — else thirsts for death as the supreme moment when the prison walls will dissolve, when all the

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curtains will be rolled back, revealing a "fiery phantasm" of reality that is something other and truer than a sinister, deceptive show.

The prisoner in *Invitation* inhabits a solitary cell with a *trompe l'oeil* window painted high up on one wall. While he tries in vain to reach up to the false window, his malicious jailers amuse themselves by peeping in at him. This notion of man as an inefficient spy efficiently spied upon is a variation on Nabokov's most arresting metaphor, that of the world (also the body and the human cranium) as *camera obscura.* We are all locked up in a dark room where an aperture has been cut in the wall through which enters a beam of light carrying a stream of images. Prisoners of a light show scripted by demons, we stumble in darkness and see only reflections, although certain reflections — the Lolita reflection, for example, and behind her, the Beatrice and the Annabel Lee reflections — are brighter and more warming than others.

Philosophically Nabokov can be categorized as a rebellious idealist. Like Beckett he understands that man is trapped within his mental reflections and like Beckett attempts to focus his art to burn a way through this intolerable limiting condition. He is also something of a gnostic, by temperament, and perhaps also through meditation on certain accidents of his personal history.

The gnostic view is that man is hurled down into the world, from light into abysmal darkness, and keeps sinking. He was rich and aery once and has become poor and gross. God is elsewhere, if He exists, and knows nothing of man's catastrophic exile, while the mundane world — often it is presented as a whole series of worlds arranged in a chain of dismal nonbeing — is stage-managed by malevolent and deceitful demons and demiurges. The goal of the gnostic is of course transcendence, beginning with efforts of concentration, self-recognition and recollection whereby faint sparks of the supramundane fire adrift in the abyss are gathered together and fanned into a small blaze. Then the adept sets out on the long journey back, hoping to circumvent the conspiracy of demons arrayed against him through certain magical tricks and occult formulas and by a certain imaginative resourcefulness representing his original, much-diminished endowment from the abode of light.

Essentially God-deriding and amoral, anticollectivist if not antisocial, profoundly ironic and tinged with paranoia, this left-handed "theology" seemed to the early church fathers a conspiratorial assault on God and His angels mounted from the smokiest depths of hell. Yet the gnostic attitude secularized expresses certain hard truths about the human situation that have been given considerable play in modern thought since Nietzsche and which have been amply documented in the

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catastrophic politics of this century. In literature the gnostic note has been sounding for a long time, from Blake to Baudelaire and his idea of the world as a forest of symbols, to later French symbolists like Mallarmé, to the sad tenebrosities of Hardy's poetry, to Yeats, with his counterpoise of a "desolation of reality" against a magical Byzantium, and beyond Yeats to the master spy, Nabokov.

All this is by way of taking issue with Andrew Field on the central problem of the role of art in Nabokov's novels. Again and again Field asserts that the fiction is mainly concerned with the business of making art. Thus *Camera Obscura* is the story of three failed artists. The emigré critic Khodasevich is summoned to report on how *Invitation to a Beheading* "illustrates the distance and incompatibility between art and life" — as if this hoary and false platitude would be any comfort to Cinncinnatus as he kneels with his neck on the chopping block. *Despair* turns out to illustrate "not the despair of a murderer scheming for money, but the despair of an artist incapable of believing in the object of his art." Even the self-referential maniac of the story "Signs and Symbols" is dragged in as an object lesson about art: he wants to "tear a hole in the world and escape," whereas "the real artist can *draw* a hole in the world and return unharmed" (one wonders from where to where). Finally and disastrously, John Shade is presented to us as "the controlling author" of *Pale Fire*, the inventor of Kinbote, the writer of Kinbote's commentary and compiler of the index, for the simple reason that Field can allow no business to go on in the Nabokov world except art business.

This is plainly wrong and drastically limits the value of Field's study as criticism. In the devastated, demonized, darkened Nabokov world, exile and imprisonment are real conditions and art, as lamp, as spyglass and lens, gathering and focusing light, is really an instrument for spying out an escape route. From where to where? From "the horrible *here*, the dark dungeon," to "there, *tam, la-bas*," call it the "Tamara Gardens," "the involute abode" or what you will. Nabokov's project is a metaphysical one. The master spy is seeking to come in from the cold to essence and transcendence. In a nutshell, the Dad in "The Ballad of Longwood Glen" really did "climb away." On Field's view, he would only have disappeared up that tree to make poems.

Nabokov: His Life in Art has a splendid bibliographical chapter which comprehensively establishes the Nabokov canon in all the relevant languages. The book gives an absorbing account of its subject's characteristically aloof dealings with the Russian emigré literary community and is full of essential biographical information, especially on the period immediately preceding and following the political assassination of Nabokov's father in 1922, when the son was launching his literary

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career. In my opinion Field writes best on Nabokov's early poetry and on his earlier "minor" fiction, which is to say that I found the book most valuable in its treatment of relatively neglected aspects of Nabokov's work.

Despite its shortcomings as criticism Field's study is, and will remain for some time to come, an essential item in the meagre list of useful Nabokov studies in English. In future editions one hopes that Field will introduce notes, since it is maddening to be told what "a prominent emigré political figure said" and to be given a long quotation from Nabokov on the relation of poetry to prose without also being told who the figure was and where Nabokov made his remarks. Field should also eliminate all those passages where he exhibits an enthusiastic and callow compliance with Nabokov's depreciations of such figures as Dostoevsky, Belinsky, Turgenev, Chernyshevsky. Nabokov's literary opinions, many of them markedly eccentric and not always graciously expressed, are the necessary tactics of literary genius, but who can take seriously a critical commentator capable of asserting that to regard Nabokov as having been influenced by Dostoevsky is like speaking of Melville as a disciple of Richard Henry Dana, Jr.?

Julian Moynahan

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LETTERS

DOCTORING THE EVIDENCE

Sirs:

In your Spring 1968 issue Norman Mailer writes:

> Sufficiently fortunate to be alienated from the benefits of American civilization, the Negro seems to have been better able to keep his health. It would take a liberal with a psychotic sense of moderation to claim that whites and Negroes have equally healthy bodies; the Negroes know they have become on the average physically superior, and this *against all the logic of America's medical civilization.* . . .

In the *New York Times,* May 19, 1968, there appears the following:

> Poor Americans are four time as likely to die before the age of 35 as the average citizen. Negro women in Mississippi die six times as often in childbirth as white women and in some urban ghettoes of the North one child in ten dies in infancy. The life expectancy of an American Negro at birth is 61 years, that of a white American is 68.
>
> In citing these figures Dr. H. Jack Geiger of Tufts-New England Medical Center said recently that the health of the poor in this country "is an ongoing national disaster."
>
> The effects of racial discrimination and economic disadvantage begin before birth, Dr. Geiger said. . . . Poor women obtain prenatal care less often than others. In the maternity wards of public hospitals 45 per cent of the mothers have had no such care. This increases three-fold their likelihood of bearing children prematurely. Mental retardation occurs 10 times more often in very small premature babies than in those born at full term. . . .
>
> The health gap between rich and poor is growing. In 1940 the infant mortality rate for nonwhites was 70 per cent higher than that for whites. In 1962 the rate was 90 per cent greater.

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We all know that "the poor" includes a vast number of Negroes and often is used as a euphemism for Negroes. Now then, who is right — Dr. Geiger or Dr. Mailer?

Irving Howe

Mr. Mailer replies:

I was not aware of Dr. Geiger's figures when I wrote the piece from which Irving Howe quotes, or I would have attempted to use his statistics to fortify my case, particularly the relation of the following two sentences: "The life expectancy of an American Negro at birth is 61 years, . . . of a white American . . . 68" and "in 1962 the (infant mortality rate for nonwhites) was 90 per cent higher."

Now a few figures from a book by J. I. Rodale, *Are We Really Living Longer?* (Emmaus, Pa., 1955). In 1850, the life expectancy of a white male at birth was 38.3 years; in 1947 it was 65.16 years. But "in 1850, white men who lived to be forty years old could expect on the average to live 27.9 years longer or to a total age of 67.9 . . . in 1947 it (life expectancy) had only increased to 30.6 (total age 70.6). In 100 years, therefore, the life expectancy had only increased 2.7 years *after forty years of age* [italics mine]." In fact, a man reaching the age of 60 in the year 1850 had a slightly longer life expectancy than a man of 60 in 1947.

Evidently, the medical gains are to be found in infant mortality rates. Infants and children who would have died one hundred years ago are kept alive today by medical science.

Now, Negro infants obviously receive inferior medical care. So their mortality rate by the Geiger figures is 90% higher. Yet note that every time an infant dies, someone else must live to the age of seventy in order to have an average life expectancy for the two of 35 years. If, then, the American Negro's life expectancy at birth is *so high* as 61 years (after incorporating an infant mortality rate 90% higher than the white man's) and the white American's life expectancy (after the advantage of his reduced infant mortality rate) is still *so low* at birth as 68 years, the inference can hardly be ignored that if the American Negro can manage to get through the rigors of his infancy, his future life expectancy — poor medical care and all — is going to be higher than the white's. And indeed after the age of 65, the contemporary Negro, despite all early obstacles has a greater life expectancy than the white man.

Perhaps the logic of America's white medical civilization is to keep the babies alive and debilitate the men.

Regards to Dr. Howe.

ABYSS

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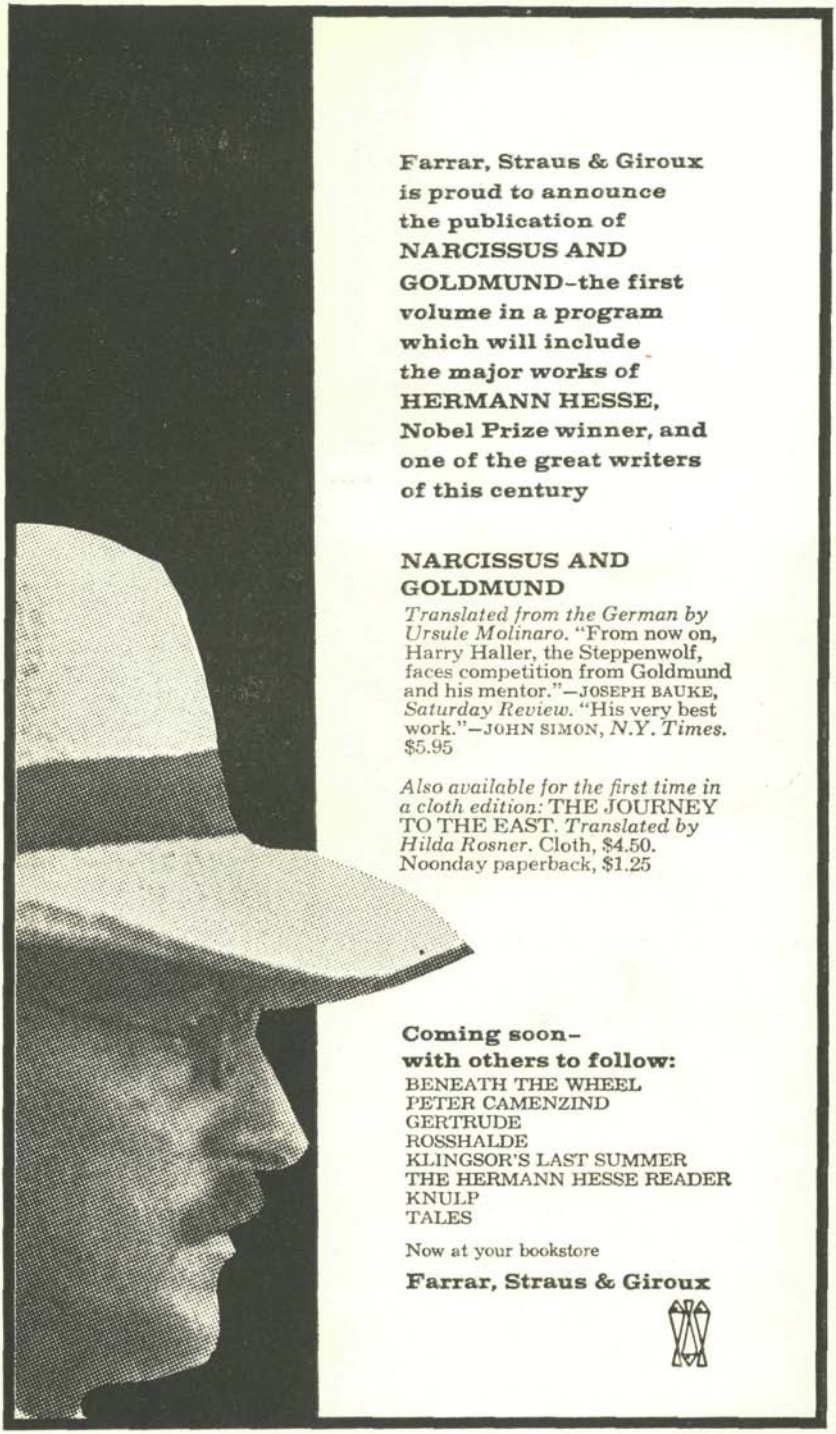

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